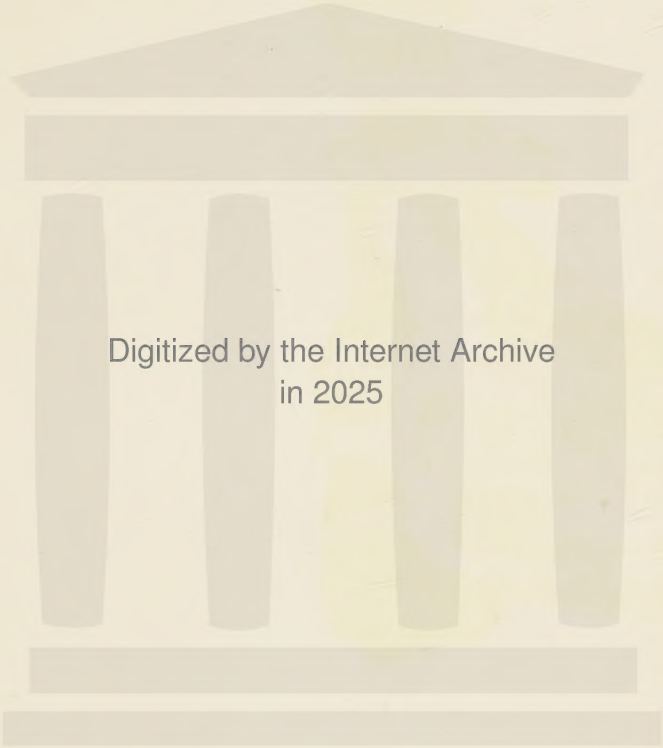
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GENTLEMEN BEGGARS

A COMEDY IN FIVE ACTS

BY

HAGOP H. BARONIAN

Translated from the Armenian and Dramatized by

ERVANT D. MEGERDITCHIAN

Author of "Bouquet of Smiles", Translator of the Comedies "Bebo" and "Uncle Balthazar", Co-Editor of "Standard Precancel Catalog of 1925"

BOSTON

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TO

ANN E. MEGERDITCHIAN

This edition signed and limited to 250 copies of which this is No.

FOREWORD

In the translation of the comedy "Gentlemen Beggars" we have made no attempt to modernize the work as originally published in the Armenian language in 1910. It is a literal translation, thus giving the English speaking public their first opportunity to enjoy the subtle humor and wit of Baronian.

Hagop H. Baronian was born in 1842, of Armenian parentage. He received his elementary education at Edirne, Thrace, and afterwards entered the Greek High School of that city. During his high school course he occupied his leisure moments evenings in the study of Armenian, Italian, Bulgarian, French, Latin and Greek languages. Referring to this he says: "I have studied Greek and know the difficulties of the language."

Baronian had a keen sense of humor, and while a youngster in school often surprised his teachers by his humorous writings.

He began the publication of his first humorous weekly, *Euphrades*, in 1869–70, and periodically published *Bee*, *Theatre*, and *Khigar** or *Ahikar* — all humorous weeklies.

Baronian was an impartial critic of humanity, a moralist, a lover of the people and loved by the people. His writings are singularly free from impurity.

As a literary satirist and journalist, his works are fountains of joy and gaiety which dispel the hours of melancholy.

One might say his humor and his satire place him in the light of a surgeon of the public morals. The credulous and those hard to please, the educated and uneducated — all classes — express admiration for Baronian's work.

His fame rests primarily upon, "Gentlemen Beggars" and "Oriental Dentist", and these plays, so replete with keen wit and humor, afford the reader a veritable joy "party".

* Khigar or Ahikar the wise man and counselor to the Kings in ancient days.

The author's high purpose and honest character are clearly discernible in his writings.

Baronian fearlessly entered into every phase of public life, criticizing and ridiculing alike spiritual and moral conditions, and exposing the weakness and inefficiency of educators and educational systems.

Politicians, bigwigs and men in public life were often angered by his articles which held up to them a mirror for self-inspection.

His scathing, yet humorous, criticism of the debauchery of his time was a political factor in raising the moral standard of the people.

In "Brother Balthazar" Baronian graphically depicts corruption in the family life. The situations and experiences incidental to infidelity to the marriage vows, as set forth in this comedy, make their impression on the audience, and when the curtain falls on the last act many a spectator has seen his own life portrayed — to his mortification.

Although he criticized the clergy and the bishops, four of the latter attended his funeral, paying tribute to his genius as a humorist and writer.

He died on May 27, 1891.

The weeklies published by Baronian were the following: *Euphrades*, 1869–70; *Bee; Theatre;* and *Khigar*, 1884–88.

In addition to the above humorous weeklies, Baronian wrote the following books and plays: "The Laughs"; "Gentlemen Beggars"; "Brother Balthazar", a comedy in three acts; "Oriental Dentist", a musical comedy in five acts; "A Promenade in Constantinople"; "The Damages of Civilization"; "The Gentries of the Nation"; "Metamorphosis of Dictionary"; "The Daily Memorandum Book of Hos-Hos"; "Dowry"; "The Pinches"; "A Servant for Two Masters," and also numerous satiric articles in daily and weekly papers.

E. D. M.

Boston, Mass.
September, 1930

DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERS

ABSOLOM. — A stout man of medium height, wearing a long, large frock coat; his eyes big and dark, with shaggy black eyebrows; large ears, and a nose twice the ordinary size. In a word, so idiotic in appearance that he could easily play an idiot's part on the stage without disguise.

MANOOG. — Seventy years of age, prominent, much wrinkled forehead, foolish expression on his face. He carries a cane.

MADAM MANOOG. — Dark complexioned, long-faced woman, with a forehead lined by age, like poor copy edited by a proofreader.

MADAM SHOOSHAN. — [City matchmaker and love broker by profession, finding wives for young men and husbands for the women, getting her commission by effecting their marriage. Some times by gossiping she could separate a husband and wife and get her commission just the same. Her age — thirty-six according to her, but forty-six according to my view, as I always add ten years to any woman's admitted age.] Small pox has left numerous marks on her long, dark face, (half of which is chin), with its prominent nose, over which two small black eyes look searchingly every minute. Her forehead is very low, and illness has deprived her of eyebrows and lashes.

POET. — A man with no resemblance to a broker,

a merchant, an artisan, or a laborer. It would be difficult to say whom he does resemble. Appears to be about thirty-two years of age. Blue eyes, yellow hair, " goaty " beard. His appearance suggests that he is in mourning or financially embarrassed. His clothes are so old and shabby an antiquarian would pay a good price for them. Although repulsive in his dress, this man has an attractive, energetic personality.

PRIEST. — Sixty years old, long beard, chain and cross hanging from neck, wearing clerical garb.

CLERGYMAN. — Also wearing clerical garb.

DOCTOR. — Well dressed, wearing tall silk hat. A clean-cut young man, light complexioned, with a round face framed by a yellow and black beard not especially becoming to him. [Some pictures look beautiful with frames, others without.]

EDITOR. — Long face, small eys, high shoulders; laughs continuously and rubs his hands while talking.

PHOTOGRAPHER. — Thirty years old, lively and clean-cut; blue eyes, " goaty " beard; wearing evening dress and white necktie.

TEACHER. — Fifty years old, thin faced and haggard looking, poorly dressed.

AUTHOR. — A middle-aged person, rather stout.

LAWYER. — Forty years old.

ACTOR. — A man thirty years old.

PRINTER. — A man over fifty, hair streaked with gray.

WAITER. — About twenty-five years old.

BARBER. — Aged fifty.

PORTERS. — All middle-aged persons.

CAST

Absolom ..... *Famous Merchant*
Manoog ..... *Absolom's host*
Madam Manoog ..... *Absolom's hostess*
Madam Shooshan ..... *Matchmaker*
Terenik ..... *Photographer*
An Editor .....
A Priest .....
A Clergyman .....
A Poet .....
A Lawyer .....
A Doctor .....
A Teacher .....
A Printer .....
A Barber .....
An Author .....
An Actor .....
A Waiter .....
Five Porters and others .....

SYNOPSIS

ACT. I. — *Kalata pier in Constantinople.*
ACT. II. — *Manoog's house.*
ACT. III. — *Same place seven o'clock in the morning.*
ACT. IV. — *A high-class restaurant.*
ACT. V. — *Manoog's house.*

GENTLEMEN BEGGARS

GENTLEMEN BEGGARS

ACT ONE

Scene represents a landing quay named Kalata, in Constantinople. Passengers and porters passing through the scene, baggage in hand. Absolom leaves the steamer [arrived from Trebizond]. His trunks, suitcase, and bundle of light bedding beside him. Voices, uproar, dropping of chains, steamer's whistle will be heard behind the stage.

A VOICE. — Y-e-e-e-e-e-e, taxi cab, taxi, taxi. *(Repeating a few times behind the stage.)*

ABSOLOM. — *(Enters)* Porte-e-e-e-r-r. *(Five porters run to him.)*

PORTER NO. ONE. — Where do you wish to go, sir? *(Puts his foot on the trunk.)*

ABSOLOM. — Number 2 Flower Street, Pera.

PORTER NO. ONE. — Very well, I know where Flower Street is. A fine street. *(Takes a trunk and goes off.)*

PORTER NO. TWO. — Me, too, knows where Flower Street is. *(Takes a trunk and goes off.)*

PORTER NO. THREE. — I go through Flower Street

almost every day. *(Lifts Absolom's bag and starts to run. All actions are done very quickly.)*

ABSOLOM. — *(Hesitating and bewildered, starts to look around to find the porters who have already disappeared in the crowd with his luggage. In anger, pounding his foot on the ground.)* What shameful disgrace is this? Where did they take my trunks and bundles? What right or reason did they have to take my bed and my trunks? How shameful the people of this city are! They take everything they see.

PORTERS NO. FOUR AND FIVE. — *(To Absolom.)* We also are familiar with Flower Street, sir! May we help you?

ABSOLOM. — *(Angry, his cheeks shame the rose.)* To hell with Flower Street, and you, too. *(While Porters No. Four and Five go away, and while Absolom is getting ready to follow the trunks, he comes face to face with editor.)*

EDITOR. — *(Approaching Absolom with a restrained laugh, and politely holding Absolom's hand.)* Are you Mr. Absolom? When did you arrive? By what liner? And how are you? How is your brother? How are political affairs in Trebizond? How is living over there? Did it rain over in your town lately? O-o-o-o-o-o-o, Mr. Absolom, Absolom!

ABSOLOM. — Yes, my name is Absolom. Just arrived. Came by Maritime liner. I am fine. Brother is fine, too. Political affairs in Trebizond are in good condition. Living over there is not so

high. We have n't had rain in our city for three weeks.

EDITOR. — Excuse me for not coming to the steamer to meet you. I had been notified from Trebizond that you surely would arrive this week.

ABSOLOM. — I don't look for people to meet me.

EDITOR. — Really, the people of our metropolis must feel fortunate and proud having a gentleman like you, a graceful young man like you, a sensible person like you —

ABSOLOM. — *(Uneasily.)* My trunks!

EDITOR. — Noble-hearted, generous-spirited person like you —

ABSOLOM. — *(Searchingly.)* Porte-e-e-r-r-r-s-s!

EDITOR. — Patriotic person like you —

ABSOLOM. — My bag-ga-a-age!

EDITOR. — Patriotic, educated person like you —

ABSOLOM. — *(Always searching.)* My trunks, and baggage!

EDITOR. — A man of great knowledge like you —

ABSOLOM. — Porters took my trunks and went off

EDITOR. — Generous-hearted, high-born, and handsome person like you among themselves.

ABSOLOM. — Were there things like that in my trunks? *(Starts to look for porters.)*

EDITOR. — Although you don't know me, I knew your family very well. Your father, oh! *(Sighs.)* God have mercy on his soul, he was a subscriber to my paper. He was a good man. He was a compassionate man, an almsgiver to the poor. Even old maids could get married by his deeds.

And he did favors to all those who asked of him. Good and pious persons like him should live long. What is the use! Cruel death always takes the good ones and leaves the bad. Let us forget the old and talk of something else. How did you like the trip? Was it restful?

ABSOLOM. — Very, very restful. I ate, drank and slept splendidly. *(Starts to walk with long strides.)*

EDITOR. — If accommodations were not satisfactory, let me know, because I shall write a column in to-morrow's paper calling the company's attention to that.

ABSOLOM. — Thank you.

EDITOR. — May I ask how old you are?

ABSOLOM. — Forty.

EDITOR. — I am guessing you are a merchant.

ABSOLOM. — Yes, sir! If you are filling an application for furnishing a passport for me, I'd like to say it is unnecessary, as I have one already.

EDITOR. — No! No! No! I will write a column in my paper, such as this, "The Most Honorable Absolom, Esq., famous merchant of Trebizond, arrived in this city yesterday. He is a linguist and an erudite merchant." I think you speak Greek, do you not?

ABSOLOM. — No!

EDITOR. — French?

ABSOLOM. — No!

EDITOR. — Spanish?

ABSOLOM. — No!

EDITOR. — German?

ABSOLOM. — No!

EDITOR. — It's all right. I will represent you to the public as one of the finest linguists, and with praise worthy of literature.

ABSOLOM. — Do you usually write in your paper the names of all new arrivals in Constantinople?

EDITOR. —Almost everyone, if they are respectable persons like yourself.

ABSOLOM. — Very well! Have my name appear in your paper then, as I am a respectable man myself. I am the owner of farms and land, oxen and cows. You may write about these, too. *(Having so expressed himself, he expected big profit from this conversation if it was published.)*

EDITOR. — Don't worry, I will write all about them, to fulfill the requirements of justice and conscience.

ABSOLOM. — I have two or three servants, could you place them in a corner of your paper?

EDITOR. — Why not?

ABSOLOM. — I have a gold watch and chain, because it may be stolen, I put it away. Do you suppose we have to write something about that, too?

EDITOR. — No need to write about that.

ABSOLOM. — Very well, but all that you have heard from me please put in the first page so people will read it.

EDITOR. — I will do so.

ABSOLOM. — Write them in big letters.

EDITOR. — Be sure I will use the largest characters.

ABSOLOM. — Did you say you announce only the

departure and arrival of prominent and respectable persons?

EDITOR. — Yes!

ABSOLOM. — If you do the same to the middle class of people, then do not mention my name.

EDITOR. — Not at a-all! We never mention and write the names of those who have n't money, no matter if they willed two thousand liras to charity or schools.

ABSOLOM. — That means you wait here every evening, just to see what rich men arrive or depart, so you may publish their names in your paper, to make known to the public, who come and go? I am sure I shall see my name in your paper to-morrow.

EDITOR. — Kindly let me have your address, so I can send you a few copies by mail.

ABSOLOM. — My address is No. 2 Flower Street, Pera.

EDITOR. — Thank you! *(Taking a notebook from his pocket writes Absolom's name on the subscription list.)*

ABSOLOM. — Send the paper in the morning as early as possible, so I shall be able to see my name in it.

EDITOR. — I will send the paper in the evening, because it goes to the press usually in the afternoon.

ABSOLOM. — How happy and grateful I would be if you sent your paper to the press in the morning. Never mind, let it be in the evening, so long as my name is printed in big letters.

EDITOR. — Surely, I will send your paper to-morrow night with the receipt.

ABSOLOM. — With the receipt? I thought you said you would send it by mail. By the way, who is that *receipt?* Does he know my house?

EDITOR. — Receipt is a paper on which I will write, "Received from Honorable Absolom, Esq., two liras* in full for one year's subscription to the daily 'Horizon'." You will keep that paper and will receive my newspaper for one year, a copy for each day.

ABSOLOM. — That means my name will appear in the paper one year steadily?

EDITOR. — No, sir! You simply will be one of my subscribers by paying me two liras.

ABSOLOM. — H'm-m-m-m. Two liras! That is too much. How about one lira.

EDITOR. — The editors don't haggle for subscriptions.

ABSOLOM. — All right! You send the newspaper, and also that small piece of paper you mentioned, and I will see about it.

EDITOR. — But I don't want you to think that I came to see you just to get your subscription. Nay! It would not be honorable of me. I simply came to see you as a friend.

ABSOLOM. — Evidently!

EDITOR. — I don't want you ever to think or say that I came to see you just to get two liras.

ABSOLOM. — I don't think so!

EDITOR. — Because there are really quite a few beggar editors who rob the new arrivals by obliging

*Lira is equivalent to five dollars.

them to subscribe. I can't do that. I have n't that kind of nature. My idea is to live as a man, and be honest.

ABSOLOM. — O-o-o-o-o, yes! I understand now. You mean to say you like to be honest.

EDITOR. — Let this interview remain between you and me, and do not tell it to anybody, because there are a few bad adventurers and miserable fellows who may hear and write crazy stories and stain my character.

ABSOLOM. — I know they would stain your character.

EDITOR. — For instance, am I guilty in this circumstance? I came to meet you on the pier and made a promise to publish your name in my paper, and you as a gentleman put your name on my subscription list. Now please tell me, did I force you to subscribe?

ABSOLOM. — Not at all.

EDITOR. — Did I threaten you with a revolver?

ABSOLOM. — Never.

EDITOR. — Did I show you a knife?

ABSOLOM. — No, you did n't. But tell me, are there really places where subscriptions could be got by threatening one with a revolver or jacknife?

EDITOR. I don't mean to say that. I just want to tell you, that by your own free will, you gave me your subscription.

ABSOLOM. — Yes!

EDITOR. — And I acted generously toward you.

ABSOLOM. — No doubt about that.

EDITOR. — I did n't act like some of these reporters. As soon as they hear of someone's arrival, run to him and urge him to subscribe to their paper.

ABSOLOM. — Those miserable fellows have no right to dishonor you. You can trust me for that.

EDITOR. — Thank you very much. Good-by, Mr. Absolom. Drop in some day and see our editorial office.

ABSOLOM. — Don't forget to put my name in to-morrow's paper.

EDITOR. — Be sure about it. *(Departs.)*

ABSOLOM. — *(To himself.)* I have never thought I was such a big man as this editor thinks. But believe me, he should know better than I how big a man I am, because he is an editor. He is educated. All those who see my name in to-morrow's paper will get excited and be interested to see me. I must wear my Sunday suit, my gold watch and chain to-morrow. Too bad! I ought to have brought my servants with me, too. But how did I know? Everybody will read to-morrow that a big man has arrived in Constantinople. A noble man, high born, generous-hearted, a linguist, an educated, refined, polite person, and every woman will say to her husband, "Hubby, let us make Mr. Absolom our son-in-law," and the husband will answer, "Let us think a moment if Mr. Absolom agrees to marry our daughter; he surely will give preference to rich girls," and thus there will be a discussion between man and wife on this

question and here the fight will start. H'm-m! What do I care! Let them fight! The publication of my name in the newspaper will give such a good impression, that in a few days' time when I find a rich girl, I will end this matrimonial business of mine, that is the main question of this journey. O-o-o-o, this marriage-e-e-e —

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

Scene represents Manoog's house, No. 2 Flower Street. [This Street is called Flower Street because of tenants planting flowers in their windows. Absolom was recommended by one of his home town friends to No. 2 Flower Street, where he could find good food and accommodation. Mr. Manoog, the owner of No. 2 Flower Street, was also notified by the same friend.] Two rooms, one large and the other small; in the center the kitchen, partly in sight. The bedroom is almost the exact size of Absolom's body, where one could see a bed, a chair, a little square table, a small mirror, a bottle of water and a glass.

PORTERS. — *(Ring the front doorbell. Door opens and they enter, put bundles and trunks down on floor, and wipe away the perspiration from their foreheads.*

MADAM MANOOG. — *(Questioning porters.)* This luggage must belong to Mr. Absolom, is it not so?

PORTER NO. ONE. — He did n't give us his name, madam! *(Continually wipes the perspiration from his forehead and neck with large black handkerchief.)*

MADAM MANOOG. — What kind of a looking man was he?

PORTER. — He was wearing a long coat.

MADAM MANOOG. — Light or dark?

PORTER. — No! It was black.

MADAM MANOOG. — It was black, you said?

PORTER. — Black but beautiful, so whoever wraps up in it will never catch cold in the winter time.

MADAM MANOOG. — *(Angrily.)* What kind of talk is that? What do you mean by "wrap up"? I am not the kind of a woman you think! Understand!

PORTER. — *(Spreads handkerchief on the chair.)* I did n't say anything bad! I don't see any harm in "wrapping up."

MADAM MANOOG. — It can't be any worse than that.

PORTER. — We can't keep particular things like that in mind.

MADAM MANOOG. — *(With temper.)* I 'll make you keep it. Do you know me?

PORTER. — I don't see any harm in "wrapping up."

MADAM MANOOG. — I have a husband, why should I be wrapped to him?

PORTER. — Those who have husbands do wrap up, too, madam! The difference between this and the husband is that this keeps one warm. Let us say, for instance, in a cold winter night you are out in the street; you can't wrap up to your husband, but you can throw this on your shoulders or wear it.

MADAM MANOOG. — What? You mean to say I have to throw Mr. Absolom on my shoulder!

PORTER. — The coat, madam! It is the coat I am talking about. How can you throw Mr. Absolom on your shoulder or wear him?

MADAM MANOOG. — And was it the coat you were talking about all this time?

PORTER. — Of course! Our conversation was about the coat, was it not? What did you suppose it was?

MADAM MANOOG. — I understood you to say that I have to wrap up with Mr. Absolom, Esq.

PORTER. — God have mercy on us! *(Takes the handkerchief from the chair.)*

MADAM MANOOG. — *(Content with the answer, orders porters.)* Take these trunks and bundles upstairs. *(Porters obeying, lift the trunks and hardly have put their feet on the first step of the stairs when Madam Manoog exclaims.)* Did you come from the mountains or somewhere?

PORTER. — No, madam! We come from Grand Rue pier.

MADAM MANOOG. — You came from Grand Rue. But is it possible to go up with those dirty shoes? Look! See how you dirty my floors! How hard I worked this morning cleaning them!

PORTER. — What can we do? These are the only shoes we have.

MADAM MANOOG. — Why are you standing and looking at me? Hurry up! Take them off.

PORTER. — Don't exclaim, madam! Please don't. We will take them off. *(Porters take off the shoes which were much cleaner than their feet.)*

MADAM MANOOG. — Will you go up with those feet?

PORTER. — *(Pitifully and very modestly.)* Of course, madam! These are the only feet God gave us.

MADAM MANOOG. — *(Angrily.)* Come on down! Don't you do it! I don't want it! Throw them down. I will bring them up myself, first chance I get.

PORTER. — That is fine.

MADAM MANOOG. — *(Gasps contritely.)* O-o-o, o-o-o, o-o-o! What shall I say to my husband, who roams around clubs and pool rooms instead of going to work, wasting his time talking politics and leaving me poor, and urging me to take in boarders? *(She takes a wet cloth, starts to clean the first step of the stairs.)*

PORTER. — Have we got to wait, madam?

MADAM MANOOG. — *(Pays no attention to porters.)* If he was a good and wise man I could have a queen's life. No children — nothing. But what shall I say when his only interest is to elect and to change Municipal members. May God curse those Municipalities that are the main cause of our poverty! For heaven's sake! What do you care who is going to be elected? Let everyone paddle his own canoe. Are you the only one left to direct the Nation's needs and affairs?

PORTER. — Have we got to wait much longer? Madam!

MADAM MANOOG. — Come to-morrow. *(Porters depart.)* He is going to vote for Mr. So-and-so, but he does n't care whether there is bread, butter, meat, or rice in the house, or whether we have wood to cook them with. He is not interested in the house at all! Early in the morning he leaves the house and returns late in the evening. Our guest has landed, and is in the city already, and perhaps will be here in an hour. Surely he is hungry, and I have n't a thing in the pantry to treat him with. If my husband was thoughtful

he would bring me every evening a little meat, or a little fish, or a little of everything. But no! Always the same old story — election of Municipalities, and every night at that.

MANOOG. — *(Opens door with key and has hardly entered.)* H'm-m-m!

MADAM MANOOG. — *(To her husband.)* Man! Where have you been since this morning?

MANOOG. — *(Talking always slowly.)* O say, wifey, listen! We have everything straightened out about the election of Municipalities, and the ballots will be cast on Thursday, and I am sure all our candidates will be elected who are, believe me, honest persons. Mr. Toros took me to the barroom and treated me to a drink and urged me to vote for his candidate, but I'll vote for those who treat me to whiskey every night and those who are honest and don't steal like some others do.

MADAM MANOOG. — Never mind the politics. Hurry up! Go out and bring me a fore quarter of lamb.

MANOOG. — *(Not paying any attention to what his wife says.)* Mr. Toros got mad, and I know he will not play poker with me any more. What do I care about him!

MADAM MANOOG. — Don't you hear me? Hurry up! Go ahead!

MANOOG — Huh! I could play checkers with sexton Mardiros, after this. Hm! What does he think!

MADAM MANOOG. — We will be able to talk about that later on. Go ahead and get me a leg of lamb from the market.

MANOOG. — O say! Did you know what happened to sexton Mardiros's wife? Um-m-m-m-m! The poor thing had a close call!

MADAM MANOOG. — No! Why?

MANOOG. — She gave birth to a baby boy, but with a serious hardship. So sixteen doctors and four nurses hardly have saved her life.

MADAM MANOOG. — Poor woman!

MANOOG. — Drop in to see her to-morrow when you get a chance.

MADAM MANOOG. — All right, I 'll go. Now let us think about the eats.

MANOOG. — Do you really need meat to-night?

MADAM MANOOG. — Sur-r-r-r-e-e. Honorable Absolom has landed. His trunks and luggage arrived just now, and he will come soon.

MANOOG. — Is that a fact?

MADAM MANOOG. — Why should I lie?

MANOOG. — Very well, then. I must go and choose a splendid leg of lamb and bring it. *(Starts to go.)*

MADAM MANOOG. — O say, Manoog! *(Manoog turns back.)* How are we going to cook the meat?

MANOOG. — If you wish, use sweet potatoes or string beans.

MADAM MANOOG. — I don't mean that. We are out of coal. Buy me some coal, too.

MANOOG. — Right you are! *(Starts to walk out slowly.)*

MADAM MANOOG. — Manoog! Manoog! *(Manoog turns back.)* What can be done with meat alone? Buy me some rice for the soup.

MANOOG. — It 's very thoughtful of you, honey. Ha!

ha! ha! I am going to buy some rice, too. *(He starts to go out quickly, and while in the middle of the doorway, his wife is calling again.)*

MADAM MANOOG. — O say, Manoog, Ma —

MANOOG. — *(Stops, turns back again, but a little grouchy this time.)* What do you want?

MADAM MANOOG. — My goodness! Man! You are going like a locomotive. I am hoarse from calling you. We are all out of onions and salt, and also buy a pint of kerosene. Do you think the guest is going to stay in darkness?

MANOOG. — Give your order all at one time so I will buy them at the same time while in the grocery. You have called me back a thousand times.

MADAM MANOOG. — Buy a water bottle for the table, also a silk crouche for my head. Look at the condition of my shoes! They are not presentable to a guest.

MANOOG. — Let us think about the food first, and later we will think about what to wear. *(Slams the door and goes.)*

MADAM MANOOG. — Manoog! Manoog! E-e-e-e Ma — *(Runs to the door and stands there.)*

MANOOG. — *(Angry and out of sight.)* Call all you want! I will not turn back again. *(Goes off. Madam Manoog at the door. Absolom approaches her, looking up anxiously at the numbers on the houses.)*

ABSOLOM. — Is this No. 2, madam?

MADAM MANOOG. — Yes, this is No. 2. Come in!

ABSOLOM. — Did my trunks and things arrive?

MADAM MANOOG. — Yes, sir! A little while ago. Come in, Mr. Absolom! If you wish you may go to your little room and rest yourself. *(Shows him the room.)*

ABSOLOM. — O-o-o! I am very tired. I 'd like to sit here.

MADAM MANOOG. — Do as you wish. Make yourself at home, Mr. Absolom. This is your house.

ABSOLOM. — Thank you. *(Starts to go to his small room accompanied by Madam Manoog, who had an old-fashioned kerosene lamp in her hand with a little oil in it.)*

MADAM MANOOG. — Well! How is everybody, Mr. Absolom — how is everything?

ABSOLOM. — Very well!

MADAM MANOOG. — How are the children? Are they going to school?

ABSOLOM. — Have n't any children!

MADAM MANOOG. — How is the family?

ABSOLOM. — I have no wife.

MADAM MANOOG. — Are n't you married, Mr. Absolom?

ABSOLOM. — No!

MADAM MANOOG. — That is not so hard. We could find a good girl for you soon, and you—

ABSOLOM. — O-o-o-o yes, I have that in mind myself. But before the girl I 'd like to eat, because I have n't eaten all day.

MADAM MANOOG. — Very well, Mr. Absolom! Pretty soon dinner will be ready. *(Goes to door, opens and looks for her husband. Absolom alone in the room starts to look around, sees a Bible on*

the table, takes it and starts to turn the leaves, and because of hunger is unable to read. Puts it down and starts to pace around the room.

MADAM MANOOG. — Please rest yourself. Feel at home.

ABSOLOM. — I have n't any reasonable cause to be uneasy, the only thing is that I am very hungry and I want to eat.

MADAM MANOOG. — Pretty soon, pretty soon I 'll set the table. *(She goes out again to look for husband.)*

ABSOLOM. — *(Alone, to himself.)* What kind of a woman is she anyhow? She keeps me fasting and at the same time she comes in and advises me to have a rest. How can a hungry person rest?

MADAM MANOOG. — *(Enters.)* You can treat me as your sister or daughter. Don't hesitate to ask for whatever your appetite likes.

ABSOLOM. — Thank you.

MADAM MANOOG. — I don't want to see my guests uneasy.

ABSOLOM. — I understand. But at the present time I would rather eat.

MADAM MANOOG. — The dinner will be served pretty soon. Don't worry about that, Mr. Absolom. *(A knock on the door. Madam Manoog goes to the door, opens it, in hopes to meet her husband and help him bring in the groceries. A priest at the door.)*

PRIEST. — *(Enters slowly.)* Hail! Madam Manoog! Pax vobiscum! Peace be with you!

MADAM MANOOG. — Blessing Lord, Father.

PRIEST. — How is everything with you, Madam Manoog?

MADAM MANOOG. — Thank God, well and still living.

PRIEST. — I met Mr. Manoog in the Square. He told me that you have a guest, so I thought I 'd come and see him.

MADAM MANOOG. — It 's very nice of you. Come in, Father, if you please! *(She shows him the room where Mr. Absolom is in despair with hunger. Priest goes in, Absolom stands up.)*

PRIEST. — Hail, Mr. Absolom! Lord bless you!

ABSOLOM. — Blessing Lord, Father! *(Bows deeply.)* Sit down, Father!

PRIEST. — *(Takes a chair.)* Me, the sinner, hearing arrival of your piety, hasten to visit and see the excellent condition of your devotion. Well! How are you, Mr. Absolom?

ABSOLOM. — Very well! Thank you, Father!

PRIEST. — Always be well, sonny. May the Lord give paradise to your family passed away, and may the Lord give long life to your family living.

ABSOLOM. — Thank you, Father! And how are you?

PRIEST. — The events with me-e-e-e! H'm-m-m-m, don't ask how I am. *(Playing with his beard.)* The — priesthood — life — nowadays! You know — May Lord save you from all troubles and keep you free from all afflictions. When parishioners are well off and happy, naturally they smile to the priest.

ABSOLOM. — That is true, Father! *(Always keeps his eye on the door, whence he expects food.)*

PRIEST. — God bless you, sonny. Seems to me that things are very bad nowadays. The parishioners

are in poor circumstances, that is why fervency among the people is getting less day by day.

ABSOLOM. — That is true, Father.

PRIEST. — Well! What can we do? Nothing but endure it. That is all we can do. The Holy Bible says: "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."

ABSOLOM. — That is right.

PRIEST. — If we do not endure, then we ought to get angry, but the prophet said: "Stand in awe, and sin not."

ABSOLOM. — *(Pays no attention to priest's talk, thinks always about food, shrinks from the presence of priest.)* Yes! It 's true.

PRIEST. — Our Lord said: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." *(Reaches for snuff-box in his breast pocket, takes pinch of it, and offers box to Absolom.)*

ABSOLOM. — *(Takes a pinch of snuff.)* Thank you, Father!

PRIEST. — You don't take enough, Mr. Absolom. Please take some more. Snuff is not an intoxicant. *(Absolom, just to cut things short and get rid of the priest, takes another pinch.)* Why don't you take some more, Mr. Absolom? Please take a handful.

ABSOLOM. — Thank you, Father! I am not in the habit of using it.

PRIEST. — Please don't refuse me, inhale some more.

ABSOLOM. — *(Aside.)* You are something unbearable. *(Takes another pinch.)*

PRIEST. — Prophet David said: " As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field so he flourisheth. "

ABSOLOM. — Is it about snuff he prophesied?

PRIEST. — No! No! It 's about ourselves he is talking. And we ought to try to be good to others in this short and quickly passing life, taking care of the poor, and sometimes to pray for the souls of our family passed out.

ABSOLOM. — That is so.

PRIEST. — We have got to be ready when the trumpet call comes — we all shall go.

ABSOLOM. — That is true.

PRIEST. — Me, the sinner, will dare to make a request to your piety, and we hope you won't refuse. Because me, the sinner, am well acquainted with your piety and fervency.

ABSOLOM. — Go ahead, tell me, Father!

PRIEST. — May Lord keep open his inexhaustible treasury for the use of pious men like you.

ABSOLOM. — Thank you, Father.

PRIEST. — May the Lord give you a thousand instead of one, and a million instead of a thousand for the construction of Holy Churches, and for the glory of the Nation. My request is this, Mr. Absolom. Next Sunday I want to offer a special Mass to celebrate the souls of your family who have passed out, and as a clergyman my duty is to remind you not to forget the members of the family who have died.

ABSOLOM. — You are right, Father.

PRIEST. — Now if you wish, tell me, so I 'll have things arranged. Don't think that it will require a big sum of money. Ten liras will cover almost all expenses. Also I will announce in church the very same day that this holy and immortal Mass is offered especially for the salvation of the souls of Mr. Absolom Esquire's family who have died.

ABSOLOM. — I am thankful, Father.

PRIEST. — Not at all! It 's our duty.

ABSOLOM. — *(Opens his pocketbook and gives money to priest.)* Here you are, Father. Take this ten liras.

PRIEST. — What is your hurry? *(Raises his hand to take money.)* Let it go for now.

ABSOLOM. — It 's all right, take it.

PRIEST. — Because of your insistence I shall take it just to please you. God bless you, sonny, and may your household grow and be cheerful. May the Lord keep your pocketbook full. Any wish you have in your heart should come through. I will also pray to God to make your business successful and save you from all troubles. Good-by, Mr. Absolom, and God bless you! *(Departs.)*

ABSOLOM. — *(Alone.)* At last I am free. He is gone. What a bunch of trouble is gathering on my head to-day! As soon as I left the steamer and landed in this city, one of the reporters stopped me and gave me a two-hour headache by his garrulity. After I left him, I had difficulty in

finding this address. I came in, but instead of getting a little rest and something to eat, the madam keeps me fasting, and every five minutes comes in and asks me not to worry about anything and be rested. Furthermore, you 'd think all these difficulties were not enough, but here comes the priest, urging me to inhale snuff, and, starting his oracle from the prophet David, took my ten liras and went. Let him go! Glad to be rid of him, too. Now I have to endure all these with a hungry stomach. Very well! But what about this food affair? Why don't they serve dinner? What do they think I am? Are they going to send me to bed hungry or something? What an outrage and shame is this? Wha-a-a-t-t-t-t imposition is this? *(The oil in the lamp burns out, and leaves Mr. Absolom in darkness.)* But this is unbearable — intolerable. I ought to change this room or call madam and ask her for better accommodations. I have two servants in my household, they stand at attention and salute me each morning, set my table before the appointed time, and look after my work. A man used to servants to wait on him, why should he go through all this bother?

MADAM MANOOG. — *(Opens the door.)* What is this? Is the oil burnt out?

ABSOLOM. — Yes, madam! The light is out. *(Represses his anger.)*

MADAM MANOOG. — Be patient, Mr. Absolom, it is our duty to look after those things.

ABSOLOM. — Yes! But I am hungry and not able to wait any longer.

MADAM MANOOG. — I told you not to worry over things, leave them to me, I shall take care of them. *(She goes out, gets the oil, fills the lamp and lights it.)*

POET. — *(Enters, approaches Absolom and exclaims.)* I am your obedient servant, Honorable Sir! *(Bows.)*

ABSOLOM. — *(Anxiously.)* What is it? What? What is it that you want?

POET. — Most Eminent Sir! Hearing of your arrival in this city I hastened to come here to lay at your feet the assurance of my great compliments.

ABSOLOM. — At my feet! *(He thinks poet has a pair of slippers for him, and raises his feet admiringly.)* Very well, put them on.

POET. — Thank you! Right Honorable Sir! *(Takes his hat off, jumps on table where kerosene lamp is. Absolom, astonished at the scene, watches impatiently to see what he is going to do on the table. Poet takes a sheet of paper out of his inside pocket, fixes his eyes on Absolom and exclaims at the top of his voice.)* Ladies and gentlemen!

ABSOLOM. — *(Frightened from the horrid voice bounces up almost a yard, loses his composure and exclaims.)* Who is this man? Can he be crazy, escaped from an asylum, or an insane one fit to be a patient in an asylum?

POET. — *(Continues reading with low voice.)* The

nation is celebrating to-day — a big procession offered in memory of the bravest hero of our country.

ABSOLOM. — What is in your mind, brother?

POET. — *(Continues reading.)* There was a time when darkness was fighting against light, ignorance against science, past against future, imperative against indicative, the sword against the pen, hate against love, meat against vegetable. But now! Yes, now! Those days are gone. They are of the past, we are the future; they are darkness, we are illumination: they are ignorant, we are erudite; they are the sword, we are the pen; they are hate, we are love; they are fire, we are water: they are meat, we are vegetable; they are cucumber, we are apple; they are the thistle, we are the rose. Gone! Passed are those centuries, when humanity was rocking this and that side in the cradle of ignorance.

ABSOLOM. — What is in your mind, brother? I did nothing to you! What is it that you want from me? Why don't you go and say those words to the one who made you angry?

POET. — *(Continues reading.)* Yes! Humanity was in torture. Humanity was insulted at the hands of cruel prevailers, and did not know whom to go to and complain.

ABSOLOM. — *(To himself.)* Lord have mercy on me! God bless us! This is another one and yet more to come. *(Aside.)* I can drag him down from that table, but I am afraid he might pull

an automatic from his pocket and shoot me down, because I see he is talking in a very angry manner and he is going mad.

POET. — *(Continues reading.)* But when science came forward and drove out ignorance, as did light when it took the place of darkness, and love that of hate: and when the pen took the place of the sword, and the future that of the past — Then! O-o-o, yes-s-s! Then! *(Loud.)* I say yes! Only then *(accent)* became known that the words humanity, nation, and fatherland were not made only for the dictionary, but were words to be stamped indelibly with steel type in everyone's mind, heart, and soul.

ABSOLOM. — Come down, brother, and tell me why are you so angry? *(Poet is shivering so that Absolom thinks every minute he may knock down the kerosene lamp. His patience exhausted he exclaims to self-invited poet.)* Are you coming down or not?

POET. — Please don't chide me.

ABSOLOM. — Come down, I said, otherwise —

POET. — *(Cries.)* Please don't break my heart that is throbbing for the nation.

ABSOLOM. — Come near to me like a gentleman, sit down and tell me whatever you wish to say. What is the use of jumping around?

POET. — Please let me finish this. O-o-o-o, you don't know how I get affected and stirred up when I read a theme.

ABSOLOM. — Come down, I said! *(Poet comes down and*

takes the chair. Absolom is angry.) Tell me now, what is there in your mind?

POET. — Please don't get angry.

ABSOLOM. — Tell me what you want, quick!

POET. — Please don't be harsh with me! I am broken hearted. I am going to cry now. *(Cries.)* Boo-hoo, boo-hoo!

ABSOLOM. — What are you crying for?

POET. — I, your obedient servant, wish to serve my nation by literature, but this nation is very ungrateful to literary men.

ABSOLOM. — I am not to blame for that.

POET. — You are not to blame for that at all, perhaps you are right. I have written a volume of poems, under the title of "Fatherland." Admirable pieces, precious words, amongst which imagination, passion, enthusiasm, rapture, and ardor are soaring and flying.

ABSOLOM. — Very well! And why are you crying over that?

POET. — The nation pays no attention to the value and merit of these words *(shows the pages)* and reckons them as childish things, leaving the author of it poor and sometimes hungry, too.

ABSOLOM. — What do I care?

POET. — Please be kind and gentle with me.

ABSOLOM. — What have I done to you?

POET. — I was going to make a request of you.

ABSOLOM. — A request? All right, ask me!

POET. — For the love of Heaven please do not shout at me. I will cry now. *(Cries.)* Boo-hoo, boo-hoo!

ABSOLOM. — *(Aside.)* O-o-o-o-o-o Lord! Give me patience!

POET. — My request is this: The theme I read to you a few minutes ago, I want to have printed.

ABSOLOM. — Go ahead and have it printed. Who is holding you?

POET. — I ask that your excellency supply the funds for printing, if it is possible.

ABSOLOM. — Why? Why should I have to pay for the printing of your theme? Who ever heard of one printing a book for his own benefit and Mr. Absolom paying the expense.

POET. — Please don't add any more wounds to my heart that is already wounded.

ABSOLOM. — Why should I wound you? Go on about your own business! What a troublesome man you have proved to be to me to-day!

POET. — Do you know how hard it is for a literary man to hear those harsh words?

ABSOLOM. — I don't know, and I don't care to know.

POET. — A poet's heart is so tender and so easily offended. The slightest word could wound it. O say, I have written a poem on this subject, listen and I shall read it.

ABSOLOM. — I have no time to listen to poems.

POET. — Please do not scorn my poem. I have spent almost two months on that poem and you don't want to hear it. Seeing my poetry insulted means my dignity is deeply wounded. Please don't criticize my poem, and let me read it to you once at least.

ABSOLOM. — I did n't come over here to listen to poetry.

POET. — Very well. I have written a tragedy, let us go over that.

ABSOLOM. — I don't want it, I told you. I am hungry and shall dine soon.

POET. — Very well! Let me make a discourse on the food.

ABSOLOM. — I have no time to listen to anything, I told you.

POET. — Please don't mention that again. It is very hard for an author to hear those words when he wishes merely to read his poems to a person. Honorable Sir! Do please be kind and sweet towards an author.

ABSOLOM. — What do you mean by " be sweet "? Shall I take you on my lap?

POET. — Please don't jeer at me. Why should you take me on your lap?

ABSQLOM. — What do you want me to do then? Shall I give you my purse in order to be called " sweet man to the authors "?

POET. — No! Just enough to cover the printing expense of my discourse.

ABSOLOM. — How much money is required for printing it?

POET. — Fifty-five liras. It is n't much. You will be my protector of literature. And I will dedicate the book to your name with a special poem printed on the front page.

ABSOLOM. — On the front page?

POET. — Yes!

ABSOLOM. — Why?

POET. — So it will be known to the public, that the book is printed at your expense.

ABSOLOM. — Very well! *(Takes out his purse and gives to the poet fifty-five liras. Poet bows and starts to depart. Absolom calls him back.)* O say! How about inserting the names of my servants also on the front page, so the nation may be informed that Sir Absolom Esq., owns farms, cows, ships, and donkeys in his home town.

POET. — *(Laughingly.)* Those you just mentioned are subjects of bucolic literature.

ABSOLOM. — I don't understand.

POET. — Yes! Poems could be written on those subjects also. If you wish, I could write one.

ABSOLOM. — What shall I do with the poem?

POET. — You could have it published in a newspaper.

ABSOLOM. — Will they publish it?

POET. — Certainly! If you only pay them a couple of liras, they may publish it forty times.

ABSOLOM. — All right! Write, then, what you said!

POET. — With greatest pleasure.

ABSOLOM. — But it has to be something good.

POET. — Very well!

ABSOLOM. — So whoever reads it will admire it.

POET. — Surely!

ABSOLOM. — Could you bring it to-morrow?

POET. — To-morrow? Ha, ha! *(Laughingly.)* What do you think? It takes one month to write and make it ready.

ABSOLOM. — One month!

POET. — Maybe longer! Reading a poem is easy, but writing one is hard. For a beautiful poem I would say it requires not more than two months.

ABSOLOM. —I-is that so-o-o-o?

POET. — Yes. But I 'll try to finish it in one month.

ABSOLOM. — What a strenuous thing it must be to write a poem!

POET. — What do you think? I could say that I have to wait almost two months for Muse to come and inspire me, and after that I shall be able to write. It is absolutely impossible to write one verse without Muse's help.

ABSOLOM. — Suppose Muse does n't come.

POET. — I am sure he will come.

ABSOLOM. — Why don't you write him a letter and ask him to come quickly? Then you won't be waiting for two months.

POET. — Honorable Sir! No need to write him a letter. He is coming himself.

ABSOLOM. — Where does he live? Is he far away?

POET. — Yes! He is far away, but he will come just the same.

ABSOLOM. — How does he come? By land or by sea?

POET. — O, no! Your Honor, no!

ABSOLOM. — Who is, then, this devilish person? Where does he come from? Let us know, so we may do something to bring him here. Suppose we give him nine or ten liras, do you think he will come this week?

POET. — Yes! Ten liras will make things easy, and

my Muse will come this week, and running, at that.

ABSOLOM. — Write him, then, and give him my special regards and tell him that Absolom Esquire wants to see him.

POET. — I certainly will. Good-by, Honorable Absolom. Thank you! I beg you tc accept that I am your obedient servant.

ABSOLOM. — *(Angry.)* No! No! No! Cut it short. Everything you said I have accepted, and I cannot accept any more.

POET. — I beg you to accept the assurance of my great praise. So I remain your obedient servant. *(Bows and departs.)*

ABSOLOM. — Very well! *(To himself.)* I wonder if my poem will prove to be something good! Is it possible that this man's Muse will come in a few days? If he does n't come, may we send for another, instead of him?

MADAM MANOOG. — *(Enters.)* Dinner is served! Sir Absolom!

ABSOLOM. — *(Enters dining room.)* Good morning, Mr. Manoog!

MANOOG. — *(Arranges chairs.)* This way, Honorable Absolom! This way! *(Shows him the best chair at the head of the table.)*

ABSOLOM. — Sit down! Sit down! I will sit here. *(Absolom sits on the chair shown to him.)*

MANOOG. — Excuse us for keeping you waiting so long for dinner. Hereafter you will have your dinner on time. Two or three important matters

prevented my wife having dinner earlier. Why? I 'll explain to you later. *(With low voice.)* Now! Let me ask, how are you, Mr. Absolom? Are you fully rested?

ABSOLOM. — Very much, indeed!

MANOOG. — Thank you! How is our friend getting along in your home town?

ABSOLOM. — He is fine, and sends best regards to you.

MANOOG. — Long life to one who brings and takes regards. Ha-a-a! *(Winks to Absolom.)* If I give you a glass of brandy will you take it, Mr. Absolom? It is good for the appetite.

ABSOLOM. — I will! One glass only!

MANOOG. — All right! Here you are! *(Fills the glass and gives it to Absolom who swallows it down, [brandy I mean, not the glass.])* Good health! How did you like it, Mr. Absolom?

ABSOLOM. — Fine! Thank you!

MANOOG. — *(Fills his glass.)* To your health, Mr. Absolom! *(Drinks four glasses, one after another, diluting with water, half and half.)*

ABSOLOM. — Good luck!

MANOOG. — We could chat and pass the time while the missus is preparing the food. Could we not, Mr. Absolom?

ABSOLOM. — Why, yes-s-s-s-s. *(Expressed in such a manner that it makes one think he would rather eat before chatting.)*

MANOOG. — Let me tell you what happened to-day. In the last two or three weeks we have been busy with the election of Municipal members. You

may think and ask yourself, "Mr. Manoog, what do you care who is going to be elected?" No-o-o! That is not so. If he, you and I, don't look after the nation's affairs, who will, then? Saying, "What do I care," is not very good judgment, and if everybody withdraws from politics, the country's affairs will remain uncared for. In my opinion everybody has got to do his part as much as possible. *(With low voice.)* Would you like another drink? It gives you appetite.

ABSOLOM. — I'm not in the habit of drinking more than one glass.

MANOOG. — Our glasses are very small. Morever the air of our city agrees with drink.

ABSOLOM. — All right. *(Both drink, wishing good health to each other.)*

MANOOG. — *(Continues his dialogue.)* This morning, while going to our Club I met our friend Mr. Melchior — he may not be as good as you. Mr. Melchior was married first to Mr. Barth's daughter. Mr. Barth was a famous man at one time, a good man, a hospitable man, pious and patriotic, who owned many stores, bringing him a big income every year. After a few years Mr. Melchior's wife died and he got married again to saddle-maker Nick's daughter, who also had brothers. One of her brothers was Mr. Ampagoom's secretary. Mr. Ampagoom had a son who lost a large sum of money, belonging to his father, in card games; and after all that, he

ran away to Russia. This son of Mr. Ampagoom was Bishop Marcus's sister's grandson's brother's son. His other brother was a jeweler in the city, a tall and handsome man. His third brother loafed for a long long time, got poor, almost died with hunger. At last he went into politics, got elected State senator, and after a year or two put himself on his feet financially. H'm-m-m. Yes! Let us cut it short. Mr. Melchior, after marrying Nick's daughter, was very happy. But hard luck came to him afterwards. Adversity after adversity, one thing after another, followed him and he lost al-l-l he had. I 'd like to bring him over here some day and you will see what a nice man he is. He has a brother who is an expert watch maker. This watchmaker was on Grand Rue for some time, afterwards he moved to Scutari, and from there moved to Sandy Street, and it seems to me he could not get along there either. Shortly, he moved from there also and I don't know where he is now. But let me tell you that he is an expert watchmaker just the same. Imagine Mr. Toros — who very seldom trusts his watch to any watchmaker for repairs, and is very fussy whom he talks to — trusts him with his watch. O-o-o-o, he is a different type of man. I am going to tell you a story about him so you will know how fantastic a person he is.

MADAM MANOOG. — *(Partly opens the door.)* Will I serve the soup?

MANOOG. — *(To his wife.)* Wait a while! You can serve it as soon as I finish my conversation. Is n't that right, Mr. Absolom? Conversation always first. If you do not care to listen to my conversation or it gives you a headache, tell me.

ABSOLOM. — No! No! No! What a funny question to ask. *(Hardly finishes his sentence before Manoog starts same old story.)*

MANOOG. — This Mr. Toros is a furrier. H'm-m-m-m — his ear is burning — and all his family are happy. All the buying for the house, groceries, furniture, and clothing, he does in person, as he does not trust anybody. He-he-he-he-he! — his ear is burning — one day he buys meat from the butcher, brings it home, weighs it, and, finding it a couple of ounces short, goes back to the butcher shop right off, argues over the weight of the meat and comes back with the shortage. A fantastic and queer person, that's what he is! H'm — his ear is burning — another time, this Mr. Toros, he-he — his ear is burning — brings his watch to the watchmaker for cleaning, and after haggling with him about half an hour, agrees at last, to pay the watchmaker one lira providing he would do the work in front of him, because Mr. Toros, — his ear is burning — as I told you, does not trust anybody, and naturally did n't want to leave his watch with the watchmaker, and go, fearing that some of the parts might be stolen or exchanged, or that the watchmaker might ruin

the watch in order to put him under new expense, as really some watchmakers do, when business is dull. The watchmaker was insulted by this action of Toros's, so contrary to his business rules and against his dignity, and got angry. Now, Mr. Absolom, if you were the watchmaker, would n't you get peeved?

ABSOLOM. — Of course I would get peeved. *(His mind was on the soup and does n't pay any attention to Manoog's stories.)*

MANOOG. — Mr. Toros, he-he-he — his ear is burning— got warm, excited by the watchmaker's harsh talk, and he also said a few rude words to the watchmaker, which he should not have said. Is n't that right?

ABSOLOM. — It is so! *(Answers mechanically, always assenting to all questions asked by Manoog, just to cut the conversation short so dinner could be served.)*

MANOOG. — The watchmaker ejected Mr. Toros, — his ear is burning — and Mr. Toros, who did n't want to leave the store, was embarrassed by his ejection. Now, Mr. Absolom, if you were in his place, you, too, would n't leave the store, would you?

ABSOLOM. — I would n't get out! *(Not knowing from where he did n't want to get out, as he had n't paid any attention to Manoog's talk, he did n't have a thought in his brain, so he simply answers "yes" or "no" to all of Manoog's questions.)*

MANOOG. — The fight starts. The watchmaker slaps Mr.

Toros on the face, he-he — his ear is burning — and Mr. Toros — his ear is burning — gives one kick to the watchmaker. I think no matter who would be in Toros's place, that was the only way to answer the watchmaker's slap. Now, Mr, Absolom, dear me, tell me don't you think he did right?

ABSOLOM. — *(Suddenly.)* Do you cook with tomatoes here?

MANOOG. — With tomatoes?

ABSOLOM. — Yes! Lots of places cook with tomatoes.

MANOOG. — What? The watch?

ABSOLOM. — Which watch?

MANOOG. — Mr. Toros's watch.

ABSOLOM. — Who is Mr. Toros?

MANOOG. — Then you didn't pay any attention to my talk at a-all.

ABSOLOM. — I did! I was quite attentive. *(Thinking of the rice and tomato soup, never listens to Manoog's talk. To himself and aside.)* Listen! Mr. Manoog, when one starts to talk he should n't talk one's head off. I have been hungry for eight hours and I don't want to know whose son is Mr. Mardiros or whose father is Mr. George. What do I care if the watchmaker slapped Mr. Toros or Mr. Toros kicked the watchmaker?

MANOOG. — It is customary here to use tomatoes for soup and for a few other meat platters, but never for watches.

ABSOLOM. — Thanks! You mean to say that you cook

soup with tomatoes? That 's all I wanted to know.

MANOOG. — Are you fond of tomato soup?

ABSOLOM. — O-o-o-o-o I love tomato soup.

MANOOG. — Very well! Let us get back to our conversation again. Where did I stop with my story? O-o-o-o yes! It was Mr. Toros I was talking about. E-e-e-r-r-r yes! Mr. Toros is a fantastic man, that's what he is. Ha, ha, ha! *(Laughs.)* — his ear is burning — I know lots of stories about him. I will tell them some other night just to pass the time. Now I want to cut it short. I met Mr. Melchior this morning and —

MADAM MANOOG. — *(Brings in steaming soup kettle.)* Let us eat while it is hot.

ABSOLOM. — Yes! Yes! Let us eat! Believe me, I am very hungry.

MADAM MANOOG. — All right, go to it.

ABSOLOM. — Thank you! *(Starts to eat the hot soup. It burns his tongue and makes him jump up.)*

MADAM MANOOG. — I am afraid it was too hot. Excuse me, Mr. Absolom.

MANOOG. — Take a little cold water, Mr. Absolom! *(Fills the glass.)*

ABSOLOM. — No harm. It 's all right.

MANOOG. — *(To his wife.)* Why don't you be more attentive and see if the food is hot or cold?

MADAM MANOOG. — Mr. Absolom, let our mistakes and faults be more or less overlooked this evening.

ABSOLOM. — That 's nothing serious.

MANOOG. — Let me tell you about to-day's events while the soup is cooling.

MADAM MANOOG. — Mr. Manoog! Don't bother Mr. Absolom to-night, maybe he does not want to hear your stories.

MANOOG. — Just to pass the time and make him happy so he won't be impatient and constrained.

MADAM MANOOG. — Keep it for some other night. How do you suppose he can pay any attention to you, being so tired?

MANOOG. — I don't think it will be tiresome for Mr. Absolom to hear the political news, and I am sure he will listen with great pleasure.

ABSOLOM. — Yes! I would be pleased to hear it, but as madam said, let us keep it for to-morrow night, because I am pretty tired.

MANOOG. — All right! As you please. But the story of our Municipalities is very amusing. Ha-ha-ha! *(Laughs.)* I wish Mr. Melchior was over here to tell us all about it, and believe me, we all would be laughing.

MADAM MANOOG. — The soup is getting cold. Come on! *(Absolom takes the spoon and starts to eat.)*

MANOOG. — Would you like a glass of whiskey, Mr. Absolom?

ABSOLOM. — No! Thank you!

MANOOG. — Madam! Give a glass of wine to Mr. Absolom!

MADAM MANOOG. — Manoog! You are a little out of the ordinary to-night. Is it proper to drink wine after soup?

MANOOG. — Why not? I want to know how he likes our wine. *(Madam Manoog goes out and brings in the cooked meat and puts it in the center of the table.)*

ABSOLOM. — *(Eats with great appetite, often swallows food down without chewing it.)* Thank God, we are satiated for one more night. *(Blesses himself, says his prayer "Our Father" with low voice, leaves the table and looks for water to wash his hands.)*

MADAM MANOOG. — Are you in the habit of washing your hands after dinner, Mr. Absolom?

ABSOLOM. — Yes! If I find water.

MADAM MANOOG. — It is not a custom for us, but I will bring some water for you to wash your hands.

ABSOLOM. — *(Washes and dries his hands.)* What room shall I sleep in to-night? *(Madam Manoog shows the room to Absolom, puts the kerosene lamp on the table and departs. Absolom alone in his bed room, looks around, stretches out his arms.)* Thank God, I am free now, and I am alone. *(Says his evening prayer and adoration, happier than a prisoner who gets his freedom, sits on the bed and starts undressing.)* I know what I am going to do after this. No more interviews with anybody. I don't care for the people in this city. They are always looking for my money, their chin music wears out my ear drums and their garrulity causes me headaches. What do I care? I am here to find a good girl, marry her, and return home. If I

like the girl I will go ahead and ask her parents for her hand. If they consent to give her to me I will get married and flee back. If they refuse — But why should they refuse? Where will they find a better man than I? Ha-ha-ha! *(Laughs.)* And when my name appears in to-morrow's paper with praise worthy of literature! Then? Everybody will beg me to marry their daughters. But all I want is one. I 'll choose a modest and decent one from them, become engaged to her, and get married. *(Goes to sleep.)*

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

Scene represents Manoog's house, same as in Act I. Absolom arose early in the morning after a good night's sleep. Opens the trunk, changes his shirt and puts on a new suit. Arm and sofa chairs and tripod table in reception room.

A VOICE. — Ra-a-a-g-g — bottles-s-s — *(Repeats a few times.)*

SECOND VOICE. — Apples-s-s four for a quarter. *(Repeats a couple of times.)*

ABSOLOM. — *(To himself while dressing and yawning. Looks at his watch.)* Only six hours' sleep. H'm. I would sleep six more hours if it was n't for these street merchants, singing, and selling sour and sweet apples early in the morning. Seems to me sleep has no chance in this hellish city. Early this morning I found my sweet sleep was faltering and did n't know how to run away. Believe me, if in the hour of our Lord's last judgment, Archangel Gabriel can't successfully raise the dead, I will make a motion that this position be given to the odd-charactered peddlers and night watchmen of this city, packed on every street. *(Madam Manoog, who knew Absolom was up, knocks on his door.)* Come in!

MADAM MANOOG. — Good morning, Sir Absolom! Did you have a good sleep? Mr. Absolom, there is a gentleman downstairs waiting to see you.

ABSOLOM. — Good morning! Tell him to come up!

MADAM MANOOG. — Very well! Mr. Absolom, tell me, how do you like your coffee? With or without cream?

ABSOLOM. — I usually drink cream without coffee.

MADAM MANOOG. — You want cream, then?

ABSOLOM. — Yes! Bring the cream. *(Madam departs. Absolom to himself.)* Let us see who this man is. He may have a daughter to marry and hearing of my arrival to this city, perhaps he is here to talk the matter over with me, early in the morning. But I won't make any promises so easy, not 'till I ascertain the character of his daughter. Above all I must get acquainted with her and examine her from all points. After that I must consult my father; not only must I love the girl, my father has got to love my wife, too. Not only my father, but everybody has got to admire my wife.

PHOTOGRAPHER.— *(Enters.)* Good morning, Honorable Absolom. *(Runs to Absolom quickly and shakes both his hands. Absolom stands up, gives both hands to photographer, who shows Absolom much respect.)* Please sit down, Mr. Absolom. It is not becoming for you to stand up. *(Releases Absolom's hands, goes backwards to arm chair in waddling and apologetic manner and sits down. Absolom sits on the sofa chair.)* Really

it was my duty to come here yesterday and congratulate you on your arrival. But what could I do? I did n't hear the news on time. I certainly beg your pardon for failing to do so. *(Starts to rub his hands.)*

ABSOLOM. — By coming to-day you made up for any neglect, so why ask pardon for that?

PHOTOGRAPHER. — It is your courtesy which prompts you to say that. But we always realize our errors. Really, what I did was a big mistake. When a famous man like yourself is coming to our capital city, and a photographer fails to welcome him, it is the greatest of errors, that's what it is.

ABSOLOM. — Absolutely! It is not a fault at a-all. Suppose you did n't come. Again it would n't do any harm.

PHOTOGRAPHER. — It 's very noble of you.

ABSOLOM. — Absolutely! I am not noble at a-all.

PHOTOGRAPHER. — Let it be so. I don't think it 's worth arguing over that. I am at your service now, waiting your orders. If you wish, we could draw here, or if you prefer to visit my studio, still better. I could draw better over there. It 's exactly the same for me. Do as you please, and I am ready to serve.

ABSOLOM. — What are you going to draw? All my teeth are in good condition.

PHOTOGRAPHER. — I know your teeth are in as good condition as yourself. My desire is for you to have your picture taken.

ABSOLOM. — I have never had my picture taken, and I don't see any need to have it taken, because I can see myself better in the mirror every day.

PHOTOGRAPHER. — If you wished to send your picture to a friend, could you send the mirror instead?

ABSOLOM. — Why should I send the mirror? I would go myself.

PHOTOGRAPHER. — That 's all right. But I shall not be satisfied until I have your picture taken. It is a shame for me not to be able to take your picture. I am sure you think so, too.

ABSOLOM. — Why?

PHOTOGRAPHER. — Who ever heard of a famous man like you visiting Constantinople and not having his picture taken? Mr. Absolom, don't give people a chance to ridicule you.

ABSOLOM. — Why?

PHOTOGRAPHER. — The cause is perfectly evident. The aristocratic man usually has aristocratic friends. You are an aristocratic man yourself and to-day or to-morrow you will receive calls from a large number of them. A great many will present you one of their photos, and you will be under obligation to give them one of yours, too.

ABSOLOM. — If I fail to give them my photo, do you suppose they will laugh at me?

PHOTOGRAPHER. — To laugh? He-he-he! *(Laughs.)* That 's nothing. They will be jeering and mocking you the same as they do a super in a cheap theatre.

ABSOLOM. — I am surprisingly astonished.

PHOTOGRAPHER. — I have never heard of a noble man like you being so careless about his photo. Really it 's a great shame.

ABSOLOM. — Great shame!

PHOTOGRAPHER. — Yes! It is too shameful. I could say one going without drawers is not so shameful as one going without his picture.

ABSOLOM. — I did n't know that.

PHOTOGRAPHER. — Civilization, development, and prosperity compel us to have our pictures taken.

ABSOLOM. — Do you think the news of having my picture taken will appear in the paper?

PHOTOGRAPHER. — This is something which does not concern the newspapers.

ABSOLOM. — You mean to say that this news would n't be announced even in the churches?

PHOTOGRAPHER. — Why should it be announced in the churches? Are you mocking me, Mr. Absolom?

ABSOLOM. — Mocking you? O-o-o-o no! That is against my principles. What right have I to mock others?

PHOTOGRAPHER. — Don't be so peevish.

ABSOLOM. — No! I want to be peevish and serious. Because I want to see everything right.

PHOTOGRAPHER. — Very well! In what position do you wish to have your picture taken?

ABSOLOM. — I have no intenton of having my picture taken, because it seems to me something useless.

PHOTOGRAPHER. — What are you saying? There cannot be anything more pleasing than a picture. If

you wish to visit your friend and fail to do so, you can send your picture instead. If you are married and away from home for some time, you could send a copy of your picture to your wife to cheer her up. If you are not married, many girls seeing your picture will know what a famous man you are, and that will lead to favorable talk in society about you. A photo is as important to a man as to have an address nowadays. Please be convinced and let us go and have your picture taken quickly.

ABSOLOM. — Where and how will the girls see my picture?

PHOTOGRAPHER. — When presenting one of your photos to each of your friends, naturally they place that picture in the family album and show it to everybody.

ABSOLOM. — Showing the picture! What good will that do?

PHOTOGRAPHER. — What do you suppose? You will be remembered always.

ABSOLOM. — What do I miss, if I am not remembered? I don't care if I am not. It 's up to them to remember or forget me. Let them do as they please. I won't pay a piaster for useless things like that, and I don't believe what you say.

PHOTOGRAPHER. — That is an insult to me.

ABSOLOM. — Who is he?

PHOTOGRAPHER. — Mr. Absolom! Do you know that you have grossly insulted an artist?

ABSOLOM. — I?

PHOTOGRAPHER. — Yes, you!

ABSOLOM. — Because I do not care to have my picture taken, you accuse and slander me! I have never insulted anybody in my life.

PHOTOGRAPHER. — You have insulted me just now.

ABSOLOM. — Go ahead and notify the police. I have no time to listen to platitudes.

PHOTOGRAPHER. — No need to notify the police. Do please reconcile your words with the rules of etiquette before speaking.

ABSOLOM. — I don't enter into fights. You may go out and reconcile fighters, if you wish.

MANOOG. — *(Enters, brings breakfast for Absolom and puts it on tripod table.)* Here is your cream, Mr. Absolom, help yourself!

ABSOLOM. — *(Draws his chair to table and drinks the cream.)*

MANOOG. — *(To photographer.)* Let me see now. How have you decided to take Mr. Absolom's picture, bust or full length?

ABSOLOM. — Not bust and not full.

MANOOG. — Sitting on the chair?

ABSOLOM. — No!

MANOOG. — Lying down?

ABSOLOM. — No!

MANOOG. — Standing by a chair?

ABSOLOM. — No!

MANOOG. — What position have you decided on, then?

ABSOLOM. — I have decided not to have my picture taken at all.

MANOOG. — That is impossible. It is not much to your

credit, Mr. Absolom. Young and old — everyone nowadays has his picture taken at least a few times a year. Even two-months-old babies have their pictures taken. Indeed, the only exception is unborn babes, and they would be photographed, too, if it were possible.

PHOTOGRAPHER. — *(To Manoog.)* I could n't persuade Mr. Absolom. He thinks that I am here to deceive him.

MANOOG. — *(To Absolom.)* No! No! No! I know him. He is not the kind of man you think.

PHOTOGRAPHER. — *(To Manoog.)* I told Mr. Absolom, that a famous man like him surely ought to have his picture taken.

MANOOG. — Ye-es! Of course he ought to have, and in different positions, too. For instance, one dozen small size; one dozen medium size; one dozen large size; one dozen standing; one dozen sitting on the chair; one dozen sitting on the chair sidewise; one dozen sitting on the chair straight; one dozen, on the chair, feet elevated; one dozen sitting on the chair, head leaning on his hand; one dozen sitting on the chair, with hands on the table; one dozen lying down; one dozen standing, cane in hand; one dozen smiling; and one dozen not smiling and not sad looking. Yes! Mr. Absolom, to miss one of these positions, means to degrade your position in society.

ABSOLOM. — Is that a fact?

MANOOG. — I have no reason to lie. You have got to

have those photos in as many positions as I have named, so that people will like you. All the famous men have theirs taken!

ABSOLOM. — Are you sure that all the famous men have them?

MANOOG. — Yes! They have!

ABSOLOM. — I thought you said that the middle class people also have the same number of pictures.

MANOOG. — No! They don't have as many. Three to six copies are as many as they want.

ABSOLOM. — I never thought that the people of this city had so much interest in pictures.

MANOOG. — Yes! It 's in pictures that one shows most interest nowadays, and the better your photo is the more attention they pay to you.

ABSOLOM. — As far as I am concerned famous men only ought to have their pictures taken. How could they tell by my picture that I am a famous man, when everybody has theirs taken?

MANOOG. — Yes! But the photos of famous people are different. They are photographed in large size and on coated paper.

ABSOLOM. — Could it be possible to have my pictures taken with my servants in front, saluting me?

MANOOG. — That will be fine.

ABSOLOM. — Really?

MANOOG. — Yes-s-s-s!

ABSOLOM. — For instance. I have farms and many cows, sheep, horses, ducks, and geese. Do you think it is possible to insert them on one side of my picture?

MANOOG. — No! That is impossible. But I think you can have the servants with you. *(To photographer.)* Is it not so, Mr. Terenik?

PHOTOGRAPHER. — That 's right, Mr. Manoog.

ABSOLOM. — Is it possible to put a caption under my picture such as this, " Mr. Absolom owns farms, horses, cows, and donkeys "?

MANOOG. — No! That can't be done. It could be, but it is not customary. It is not necessary to write captions under your picture, because people will quickly notice you without it.

ABSOLOM. — *(To photographer.)* Could you take it while I am on horseback?

PHOTOGRAPHER. — Yes!

ABSOLOM. — Provided my horse is galloping?

PHOTOGRAPHER. — That is a hard thing to do.

ABSOLOM. — Very well! I will see about it in the morning.

PHOTOGRAPHER. — If you wish I could bring the camera here, to-morrow.

MANOOG. — Yes! Yes! Bring the camera here, because it is not becoming for Mr. Absolom to go to studios. The famous people usually have their pictures taken in privacy.

PHOTOGRAPHER. — With great pleasure. *(He gets up and rubs his hands, waddles this and that side, affected and lackadaisical as if wishing to say something, yet withholding it. [It is evident when one wishes to speak but has not the courage, that he intends to ask for money.])*

ABSOLOM. — Bring camera here to-morrow!

PHOTOGRAPHER. — Very well! *(Continues to waddle and rub his hands.)*

ABSOLOM. — *(Sees photographer delay his departure, gets a little angry.)* I told you to bring the camera to-morrow, did n't I?

PHOTOGRAPHER. — Yes! I understood, and I will bring the camera to-morrow, but we have a custom... Tha-at — e-r-r-r-r — please excuse us-s-s -s — e-e-e-r-r-r —

ABSOLOM. — Tell me! What is it?

PHOTOGRAPHER. — Please don't feel bad.

ABSOLOM. — No! I will not feel bad.

PHOTOGRAPHER. — When it 's necessary to take the camera to someone's house, it is customary for us to ask a deposit in advance. Not because we mistrust — O-o-o-o no! Just to respect the custom, that 's all!

ABSOLOM. — What a foolish custom that is!

PHOTOGRAPHER. — It 's a custom at least.

ABSOLOM. — Very well! Is four liras enough?

PHOTOGRAPHER. — Yes! It 's plenty. *(Absolom gives four liras to photographer, who opens the door and disappears.)*

ABSOLOM. — *(To Manoog, hesitating.)* You say if I don't have my picture taken there will be no respect for me in society?

MANOOG. — Nay! But when we see that high-class people have their pictures, why should n't you have yours? Suppose one of them wished to have a picture of you and you answer him " I never had one taken "!

ABSOLOM. — What will happen then?

MANOOG. — Nothing will happen, but —

ABSOLOM. — But what? Will they take away my farms from me?

MANOOG. — Absolutely not!

ABSOLOM. — Are they going to steal my cows and sheep from me?

MANOOG. — No. But they will take you for an old-fashioned, ignorant man, and won't show you the same respect they would to famous men.

ABSOLOM. — How am I going to have my picture taken so that there will be no doubt of my being a famous man? As I understood from you the middle class also have the right to have theirs taken.

MANOOG. — To show you are not a middle-class man, you should have it taken in large size and leaning your elbow on the sofa chair.

ABSOLOM. — Have I got to wear my best suit?

MANOOG. — Surely!

ABSOLOM. — I have to wear my watch and chain of course!

MANOOG. — Surely!

ABSOLOM. — I 'll be smoking my pipe, while two of my servants stand in salute to me, and the third holding my horse, in back of me.

MANOOG. — Yes! Yes!

ABSOLOM. — What more do we need to make the picture more wonderful?

MANOOG. — That is enough.

ABSOLOM. — I wanted to be in a position as if I was

scolding my two servants, dismissing them from my presence and have them leave the room, humiliated. You know a thing like that looks good. What about being in the position of beating one of my servants? For instance, I will be calling down my farm superintendent, saying "How many times have I commanded you to be kind to my farm hands, and nice to my cows; to plow and seed the ground on time; as long as you have failed to do these, you are discharged." The farm superintendent, wiping away his tears, kneels at my feet and begs me, saying, "For the sake of my family please don't discharge me. I have eaten your bread and butter for all these years. You are my benefactor. How many times I have taken you in my arms, and promenaded with you, in your babyhood days!" Don't you think things like that look good in the picture?

MANOOG. — We will think about those to-morrow. Let us go back to our yesterday's story, which has not been finished. *(Thinks a moment.)* O-o-o-o yes! As soon as Mr. Melchior saw me —

ABSOLOM — Or you know things like this. I 'll be lying on the sofa on my back, and my servants pulling off my trousers.

MANOOG. — As soon as he saw me, he came to me, and —

ABSOLOM. — Don't you think it will be glorious with my *narghile**?

* Narghile is an oriental apparatus for smoking tobacco.

MANOOG. — He came to me and holding my hands said, "Mr. Manoog! We ought to get busy and do a little work, otherwise the fellows we don't like will get in the Municipalities."

ABSOLOM. — And *marpooge** ten yards long like this—

MANOOG. — Leave those things for to-morrow, Mr. Absolom! Give me a chance to finish this story of mine. Mr. Melchior, holding my arm, brought me to the club where I saw young men engaged in a card game.

ABSOLOM. — I would like to say that the smoking tube [marpooge] will look better in the picture if it is a little shorter. *(Absolom and Manoog continue snatching words from one another, each wishing to tell his own story first, like choir boys reading psalms.)*

MANOOG. — You are right, Mr. Absolom! Short smoking tube looks better in the picture, but the candidates for Municipalities should be men of high standing.

ABSOLOM. — Could you tell the best?

MANOOG. — O-oh yes! But what is the use of my cognizance? The returns of the votes will tell.

ABSOLOM. — The votes?

MANOOG. — Yes! According to our constitution the election is based on the votes.

ABSOLOM. — What are you talking about? Do you mean to tell me that this ward or that ward has got to vote for the selection of the best smoking tube?

* Marpooge (part of Narghile) is a long flexible tube by which the smoke is drawn through the water.

MANOOG. — No! Mr. Absolom. We were talking about Municipalities.

ABSOLOM. — How did you get that way? We were talking about the *marpooge.*

MANOOG. — Don't get peeved, Mr. Absolom! Let it be so.

ABSOLOM. — Why should I get peeved? Let us buy one to-morrow.

MANOOG. — All right! We will.

SHOOSHAN. — *(Poking her head in the door first, then enters and advances one pace.)* If the conversation is confidential, I shall go out.

MANOOG. — No! No! No! We are chatting about Municipalities.

SHOOSHAN. — The devil may bust those Municipalities and the state of affairs, too. *(She turns her head slowly to Absolom, and takes a chair.)*

MANOOG. — Welcome, madam!

SHOOSHAN. — Thanks! *(To Absolom.)* I must welcome you, too, Mr. Absolom! How do you find our city? Do you like it?

ABSOLOM. — Splendid! Marvelous!

MANOOG. — *(To Shooshan.)* What is bringing you this way? An engagement or something?

SHOOSHAN. — Yes, sir! While I was across the street, I thought I would drop in and see you. Yes! I am trying to make a match for Madam Antaram's daughter with your neighbor's son. I had nearly everything finished, when something suddenly turned up. Madam Martha desiring to engage her daughter to the same boy,

has told him a few unkind things about Antaram's daughter, and he has become undecided. Just for that reason I came to persuade him, but they were not home. I must come again to-morrow.

MANOOG. — Why don't you find a girl for Mr. Absolom? *(Absolom laughs.)*

SHOOSHAN. — While I was downstairs Madam Manoog told me that Mr. Absolom is a single man, and really it was just for that I came up. *(She wipes her nose with white handkerchief.)*

ABSOLOM. — Yes! I have that intention. *(Gets up and treats her to cigarette.)*

SHOOSHAN. — *(Takes cigarette.)* If you have intentions of getting married, I could find a girl to fulfill your requirements. I am in this business for twenty years and am acquainted with almost everybody. What kind of girl have you in mind? I would like to have an idea first. *(Manoog sees that Shooshan and Absolom are engaged in conversation, and thinking that there is no chance for him to talk about his stories — departs.)*

ABSOLOM. — I want a beautiful girl. *(Laughs.)*

SHOOSHAN. — I know you want a beautiful girl. But tell me, has she got to be rich?

ABSOLOM. — Yes!

SHOOSHAN. — Modest?

ABSOLOM. — Necessarily!

SHOOSHAN. — Sixteen or seventeen years old, of course!

ABSOLOM. — Right.

SHOOSHAN. — To be able to play the piano, I presume?

ABSOLOM. — She ought to be.

SHOOSHAN. — Good dancer of course!

ABSOLOM. — Yes ma'am!

SHOOSHAN. — Good! I have already a girl of this type in mind. But those girls are not good housekeepers. They sit down, with crossed legs, sing all day long, or dance and promenade the whole day. I want to tell you these little things in advance so you won't blame me later. There are good girls, too, but it is hard to find them. Among the type of girls you have mentioned there are girls who, after marriage, very often fall in love with another fellow, and elope with him, and there you are, waiting for your wife to return.

ABSOLOM. — Do you mean that? If so, I don't want one of that kind.

SHOOSHAN.— But there are some girls who would go crazy about you.

ABSOLOM. — If that is so, I want one of that kind.

SHOOSHAN. — There are some girls who live with their sweethearts for a month not even thinking of you.

ABSOLOM. — If so, I don't want one of that kind.

SHOOSHAN. — There are some girls who won't be separated from you even for a minute.

ABSOLOM. — If so, I want one of that kind.

SHOOSHAN. — Don't be surprised at my telling you these things because there are husbands who let their wives have a sweetheart, and, getting a big

sum of money from the girl's father, overlook her fault.

ABSOLOM. — Really? Are there husbands like that in the world?

SHOOSHAN. — They are as numerous as the hairs on my head.

ABSOLOM. — And who wants to associate with that kind of a woman or man?

SHOOSHAN. — Everybody! They justify the wife, saying "the devil led astray the poor soul," and pardon the husband, saying "the poor man don't know a thing about his wife's behavior."

ABSOLOM. — I 'll go wild this minute. I don't want that kind! I don't want her. Let things go for a while. I am going back to my home town and get married there.

SHOOSHAN. — At the same time there are some girls who would even die for you.

ABSOLOM. — If I find one, just like what you said, I would marry her.

SHOOSHAN. — And that 's the kind of girl I am going to find for you, too. I am asking questions just to understand the type of a girl you wish, Mr. Absolom. We see such surprisingly grotesque marriages almost every day. Once I was keeping the "love's double entry" of a man who got married for curiosity, and in making up his final "balance sheet" I saw that this man was bankrupt in morality. I cut out all my dealings with him, but I was surprised at seeing him still a respectable man in society, and

venerated and honored by everybody as a man of good morality. My curiosity got much deeper. I looked his " balance sheet " over and over, and what mistake do you think I have found? Ha-ha-ha! *(Laughs.)* The wife, whom I have recorded in the " ledger " as the husband's partner, has been entered in the " capital " column of her husband's book. If I had occasion to publish some day all the love bookkeeping I know, really it would cause great excitement among the bookkeepers, because I know a great many husbands who are recording their wives under " general expense " column. A majority of them write their wives under " office fixtures " expense. Others classify their wives under " bills receivable ". I would say that happy marriages are pretty scarce — marriages where wife is recorded as husband's partner in love book. Mr. Absolom, marriage is something sweet, and you will be happy every day, if you can find a good girl who is suitable for you.

ABSOLOM. — And that is just the reason I want to get married.

SHOOSHAN. — If your wife is not suitable for you, you are in hell fire every day.

ABSOLOM. — And that is the reason why I am afraid to be married.

SHOOSHAN. — Look! Let me tell you something. I am sure Your Excellency wishes to marry a college type, because I know you are educated yourself.

ABSOLOM. — Yes! I want a highly educated girl.

SHOOSHAN. — I could find her for you, but let me ask you this. Do you speak French?

ABSOLOM. — Is it necessary to speak French to marry a high-class girl?

SHOOSHAN. — Yes! Because educated girls usually speak French, and when your wife speaks to a man in a language unknown to you, you get jealous.

ABSOLOM. — I am going to learn French, too.

SHOOSHAN. — Besides, there is less happiness in the marriage where the wife is more educated than the husband.

ABSOLOM. — That is true, I think.

SHOOSHAN. — Is Your Excellency familiar with European songs and music?

ABSOLOM. — Absolutely not, and what is more, they make me tired.

SHOOSHAN. — What would you do if your wife played European tunes on the piano, and for hours, mind you?

ABSOLOM. — I would n't allow it. I get weary —

SHOOSHAN. — She takes pleasure.

ABSOLOM. — What right has a wife to annoy her husband?

SHOOSHAN. — What right has a husband to deprive his wife of a pleasure?

ABSOLOM. — If there are so many things to worry about I won't marry.

SHOOSHAN. — That should not be so. You merely have to learn to play the piano just to please your wife.

ABSOLOM. — Do you think I can learn?

SHOOSHAN. — Why not? I think it is much easier for you to learn to play the piano than to force your wife to stop her playing.

ABSOLOM. — If that is so, then we have settled that point already.

SHOOSHAN. — My reason for telling you this is that I don't want to be misunderstood. I tell the truth in advance to be free from all responsibilities. I have all classes of girls under my control — high, middle and low classes. I have merchandise for sale from the three classes I just mentioned. Your Excellency, after consulting your pocketbook could choose the class you wish. You know, of course, that high classes are expensive, the middle class not so high and the low class is cheap.

ABSOLOM. — I don't want a cheap class girl.

SHOOSHAN. — Very well! What kind of girl do you wish, light or a little dark?

ABSOLOM. — I like a light girl best.

SHOOSHAN. — Blue or brown eyes?

ABSOLOM. — O-oh my! Let me tell you that I love both blue and brown eyes.

SHOOSHAN. — One or the other. Because there is n't any girl with one blue and one brown eye.

ABSOLOM. — Let it be blue eyes, then.

SHOOSHAN. — Very well! What about the color of her hair and her weight?

ABSOLOM. — Tall with long hair.

SHOOSHAN. — How about her waist line?

ABSOLOM. — I want her to have a thin waist line, but I don't want her to be too lean, as I want to see her flesh shaking when she walks.

SHOOSHAN. — I get you. That is enough. I know a girl who is just the one you want. She is very modest and it seems to me she would die for her husband.

ABSOLOM. — And that's the kind of girl I want.

SHOOSHAN. — She may fall in love with you to-morrow when I propose you to her. Let me have your photo, so I may show it to her.

ABSOLOM. — I 'll have my picture taken to-morrow.

SHOOSHAN. — To-morrow? That means we have to wait almost a week before we get them.

ABSOLOM. — Why should we wait, we could go to-morrow. E-r-r-r is she a high-born girl?

SHOOSHAN. — Yes!

ABSOLOM. — Is her father rich?

SHOOSHAN. — He is very rich, but he does n't show it.

ABSOLOM. — Has he many stores?

SHOOHAN. — Twenty of them, I think.

ABSOLOM. — Does he own a house?

SHOOSHAN. — Forty of them.

ABSOLOM. — All right. Day after to-morrow we will go and see her.

SHOOSHAN. — With greatest pleasure, Mr. Absolom. I 'll be here at noon, and we will go together. Good-by, Mr. Absolom! Be sure I won't deceive you, and I am not the kind to get you in trouble. Good-by. Day after to-morrow. *(She departs.)*

MANOOG. — *(While downstairs, drinking cup of coffee*

sees Madam Shooshan's departure. He enters.) And Mr. Melchior holding my arm led me to the club. This club was a barroom owned by Mr. Gomek once. God have mercy on his soul! He was a good man. He caught some sort of disease, a number of doctors attended him, but they found no chance to save him. And so he was laid to rest.

MADAM MANOOG. — *(Newspaper in her hand enters and gives it to Absolom.)* Honorable Sir has brought the paper and sends his best regards to you. *(She departs.)*

ABSOLOM. — *(Opens and starts to read the newspaper.)* "Our Dublin reporter writes — " That 's not it. Let us read bottom part. "Sewing circle —" That 's not it either. Let us look on the other page. "We have seen the following lines in Courier de Orient — " No-o-o! Let us look at the next page. "Times's reporter cables the following—" I can't see my name in this paper. Let us look here. Ha-a-a! *(Laughs.)* "We have the honor to announce the coming of another member of the noble class to our metropolis. The famous business man, Mr. Absolom Esq., an owner of many farms, a good patriot and linguist, a high-born, generous man, well known to high-class people, arrived yesterday on Maritime liner to this city, and landing at pier Pera, he went directly to No. 2 Flower Street. Really good citizens of our metropolis will feel happy and joyful to have a person like Mr.

Absolom among them." *(To Manoog.)* Look! What he has written about me! *(Reads again, much louder.)*

MADAM MANOOG. — *(Enters.)* Honorable Sir sends his best regards. A subscription fee is coming to him.

ABSOLOM. — Right now! *(Gives the money to Madam Manoog. She takes it and runs out. Absolom to Manoog.)* I think the editor has stated it pretty good. Eh! It is n't so bad.

MANOOG. — No! It is n't so bad.

ABSOLOM. — It is a precious paper, I think.

MANOOG. — It could be more precious still.

MADAM MANOOG. — *(Enters and gives to Absolom a letter and a large parcel.)* Honorable Sir brought these and sends his best regards to you. *(She departs.)*

ABSOLOM. — *(Opens the letter and reads.)* "Honorable Sir: Hearing of the arrival of Your Excellency to our metropolis, I hasten to recognize your arrival by sending you ten copies of my newspaper. I am in hopes you will encourage this paper by subscribing for it, which means encouraging me. I got the call to serve the nation in editorial circles, which is very strenuous. I am respectfully yours, Editor-director of the *Daily News*.

_____ _____"

What am I going to do with ten of them?

MANOOG. — We will read until we are satiated.

ABSOLOM. — *(Madam Manoog enters and gives another*

letter to Absolom who opens and reads it. Madam departs.) "Honorable Sir: Your well-known patriotism encouraged me to send you fifteen copies of my newspaper. It is too good for me to hope that you will be pleased to receive them and be a patron of journalism, which is unfortunately in dull condition because of not having sufficient readers. I remain, respectfully yours, Editor-director of the *Daily Horizon.*

_____ _____"

MADAM MANOOG. — *(While Absolom folds the letter she enters, presenting to him a letter and a parcel of books.)* Honorable Sir sends his love and best regards to you. *(She departs.)*

ABSOLOM. — *(Opens the letter and reads.)* "Honorable Sir: My poems — the children of my brain — which have been published recently, I have decided it would be fitting to send you forty copies. I hope you will have the grace to receive them, which will give me great encouragement, so I may be able to publish my second volume in a few days. Asking you to receive the assurance of my deepest respects, I remain the obedient servant of your Honor.

_____ _____"

(Absolom folds letter and puts it in his pocket. Madam Manoog enters. Absolom to Madam Manoog.) Did Honorable Sir send his best regards to me again?

MADAM MANOOG. — No sir! The porters are downstairs

waiting for their money. *(Absolom gives two liras to Madam Manoog. She departs.)*

MANOOG. — *(Continuing story.)* In one corner of the club a few fellows were very busy making ready the list of Municipal candidates. These fellows were working against us, trying to elect their friends, who are in the habit of taking bribes.

MADAM MANOOG. — *(Enters, books in her hand.)* A young man came, left these books and went. Honorable Sir sends his best regards to you and he is in hopes to visit you to-day or to-morrow. *(She puts the books on the table.)*

ABSOLOM. — What shall I do with all these books? Am I going to be a bookseller or what? I don't want them! Hereafter don't take any more books. Just say Mr. Absolom is not here and send them away.

MADAM MANOOG. — That can not be done. You are not familiar with those editors. There are such fellows among them, if they ever heard you had subscribed to the paper of one of their competitors and refused theirs, they would attack you and write terrible articles about you in their papers, the like of which you have never heard in your life.

ABSOLOM. — If that is so, receive all the newspapers they bring. We are in the trap now, and can't help it. That is all. If they do bring books don't accept them. *(Madam Manoog curtseys and departs.)*

MANOOG. — Though these fellows were trying to elect their men for Municipalities, they had a disagreement among themselves. The jeweler wanted to vote for his richest customer; the baker wanted to vote for the customer in whose house he was leaving ten loaves of bread every day; and the tailor wanted to vote for the young man for whom he cuts and fits suits twice a week. The saddle-maker wanted to see elected the rich man in the Municipalities to whom he was selling two saddles every year. The editor wanted to see all his subscribers in Municipalities; the lawyer wanted to vote for one who brings in the most cases; the doctor wanted to vote for the one who was very ill; and the bartender wanted to vote for the one who drinks the most whiskey and wine. Just like that. They were all mixed up among themselves.

DOCTOR — *(Enters quickly, takes his hat off and greets the two in the room.)* My greetings to you both.

MANOOG. — *(Starts to go out, angry and growling.)* In all my days I have never seen such a thing. They won't give me a chance to say two words. As soon as I get the opportunity to speak, someone comes in, starts his story, and my sentence rests unfinished on my tongue.

DOCTOR — *(Sits on the arm chair.)* Is it Mr. Absolom's Excellency I am speaking to?

ABSOLOM. — Yes! It is I.

DOCTOR. — I am thankful you are Mr. Absolom. I have read in the papers of your arrival and was

very glad to know that noble-hearted patriots like you are numerous in the nation. Because a nation is not a nation if the people do not love their country.

ABSOLOM. — Yes!

DOCTOR. — Naturally the patriot, too, is not a patriot without a country.

ABSOLOM. — Right.

DOCTOR. — These two are related to each other so closely, they would be lost if they were separated.

ABSOLOM. — That 's right.

DOCTOR. — *(Slowly and with serious expression.)* The country which fails to reward and encourage her officials has no right to be classified as a nation.

ABSOLOM. — Absolutely!

DOCTOR. — And when a government employee is not receiving his wages he naturally gets discouraged and thinks sometimes of drowning himself.

ABSOLOM. — It is too childish to do that.

DOCTOR. — Excuse me, Mr. Absolom, if I talk a little freely to you in our first interview.

ABSOLOM. — I don't mind.

DOCTOR. — I, your servant, spent six years in European colleges taking up physical courses.

ABSOLOM. — Beautiful art!

DOCTOR. — Losing my sleep nights, I have read, written, and studied hard so that I would be able to return to my home town some day and serve my country.

ABSOLOM. — S-u-r-e! Everybody has got to serve his country.

DOCTOR. — I have been here two years, and in all that time I have hardly had visits from four patients. Get me right, Mr. Absolom, and think how doctors are treated here!

ABSOLOM. — That is something to be sorry for. Why? Have n't the people in this city been in the habit of getting sick?

DOCTOR. — Yes! They have been, but they don't respect their own native doctors.

ABSOLOM. — Is that so?

DOCTOR. — Yes! When a person is ill he consults foreign physicians without knowing what experience they have had. There are pretty nearly two thousand doctors in this city, five or six of whom are having a marvelous time, but the rest of them, with eagerness, wait the whole day for a patient to come in, so they may make some money.

ABSOLOM. — That is a bad state of affairs.

DOCTOR. — What can a physician do when his own kind consults and visits foreign doctors? *(Looking up, hands stretched.)* O-y-y foreign patronage! When do you leave here?

ABSOLOM. — Foreign patronage is not a good thing.

DOCTOR. — Moreover, there is not enough illness in the nation to encourage and keep doctors busy. What is the use of having skillful physicians if there is not enough illness spreading through the country, no matter if they are clever, better

trained and equal to European doctors. And likewise a country has no right to have talented and intelligent authors, while there are n't enough studious bookworms around. Talent and intelligence die without encouragement.

ABSOLOM. — That 's perfectly right.

DOCTOR. — Can you imagine, Mr. Absolom, how discouraged I am? I have regretted a thousand times, and maybe two thousand times, that I ever became a doctor. I had rather be ill and pass out, than be a doctor. I see there is more respect for the ill in the country, than there is for a clever doctor. Also there is more respect for ignorance than for science; lightheadedness is more respected than levelheadedness; vices are more honorable than virtues. To God and Heaven I have made a vow, that if I receive as a patient any of my famous countrymen, I will praise him and his name in all the newspapers.

ABSOLOM. — *(Hearing that the doctor was going to publish the names of his patients in the newspapers, his egoism is aroused. To himself, aside.)* Let me play sick, and my name, too, will be published by the doctor in the paper. *(To doctor.)* Thoughtful of you, doctor, to come here to-day. I have not been feeling well for the last few days.

DOCTOR. — What is the trouble?

ABSOLOM. — I don't feel well, doctor!

DOCTOR. — On which side?

ABSOLOM. — Which side?
DOCTOR. — Yes!
ABSOLOM. — Every side of me.
DOCTOR. — *(Takes out stethoscope, makes a short and quick examination, tapping on his back and chest with fingers.)* How is your appetite?
ABSOLOM. — Fine, doctor!
DOCTOR. — Do you digest your food quickly?
ABSOLOM. — Yes! I digest my food!
DOCTOR. — Do you sleep good nights?
ABSOLOM. — Very good! But I feel something bothering me.
DOCTOR. — Do you have a headache at any time?
ABSOLOM. — Yes!
DOCTOR. — Weakness and things like that coming on?
ABSOLOM. — Right!
DOCTOR. — Sometimes shivering, and things like that?
ABSOLOM. — Yes! Yes! Shivering! *(Aside.)* I have never shivered in my life.
DOCTOR. — Do you have a fever after shivering?
ABSOLOM. — Fever!
DOCTOR. — Do you have a cold sweat after fever?
ABSOLOM. — Some sweat.
DOCTOR. — Do you have a bitter taste on your tongue in the morning, and things like that?
ABSOLOM. — Yes! A bitter taste on my tongue in the morning.
DOCTOR. — I get you. There is nothing serious, and you will be well soon. Just a cold.
ABSOLOM. — It looks to me, too, as if I had a bad cold.
DOCTOR. — There are many doctors who don't

understand such an illness. They write wrong prescriptions, which means inviting another sickness.

ABSOLOM. — I am so glad you understand my illness so well. Please give me something to break it up quickly.

DOCTOR. — *(Opens his bag, writes a few lines on the paper and gives it to Absolom.)* This is a red colored water, take one coffee cupful every hour, a little bitter, but efficacious.

ABSOLOM. — Very well.

DOCTOR. — I forgot to ask how is your habit?

ABSOLOM. — My habit? Really I have nothing to do with crooked people, and I am nice to everybody.

DOCTOR. — You did n't get me right! I mean to say did you go out — you know — every morning regularly?

ABSOLOM. — Since I came here I was not able to go out two mornings.

DOCTOR. — Is that right?

ABSOLOM. — I am not obliged to lie.

DOCTOR. — I must give you another prescription. *(Writes on another piece of paper and gives it to Absolom.)* Mr. Absolom, take this last one first, so you will be able to go out regularly — you know — and after that take the red water.

ABSOLOM. — If I take this medicine will I surely be able to go out to-morrow?

DOCTOR. — Yes! Positively.

ABSOLOM. — What a beautiful medicine that is! If the

guests come in again and get me in conversation, then?

DOCTOR. — What bother could the guests give?

ABSOLOM. — What do you mean they don't bother? This is the second morning I would like to go out, and I could n't get a chance. They come in and give me nervous headaches by their garrulity. I must, I must go out to-morrow, because my picture has got to be taken.

DOCTOR. — No! No! No! You did n't get me right there. I want to know how is your stomach.

ABSOLOM. — O-o-o-o, my stomach! My stomach is a stomach similar to everybody's stomach.

DOCTOR. — Is it hard?

ABSOLOM. — I don't know. Really I am not interested.

DOCTOR. — *(Discouraged.)* Do you move or do big work, at least once a day.

ABSOLOM. — Yes! Yes! I do a great many big works.

DOCTOR. — Very well! I 'll be here to see you again to-morrow. I don't want to ask, but you can pay me a little in advance if you wish.

ABSOLOM. — S-u-r-e! *(Gives some money to Doctor.)*

DOCTOR. — Good-by, Mr. Absolom! Don't worry! After taking your medicine two or three times, you will feel better.

ABSOLOM. — Thanks doctor! *(Doctor takes his hat and stands in doorway.)* Don't forget to write, doctor!

DOCTOR. — *(Remembers what he should write.)* Yes! Yes! I remember now! Surely I shall publish your name in the paper. Good-by.

ABSOLOM. — So long! *(Doctor departs, Absolom to himself.)* I was afraid that the doctor might say "Mr. Absolom, you are not ill" and catch on to my fake illness. I was nervous for nothing. Ha! Ha! Ha! *(Laughs.)* Not only he did n't understand my fake illness, but he also said that I 'll be better after taking the medicine three times. Bo-o-o! Mr. Doctor, you don't know a damn thing! And my grandmother knew all about doctors, too, so she never would call for one. I am not sick, but I got sick for the sake of seeing my name in the newspapers. Gee, but I should n't lie! *(To rest his conscience.)* Let it go! All my friends may think I have the flu and that I did n't have a restful night's sleep on account of the cough. *(He wishes to ask for something to eat, but he sees from the window three new visitors already waiting for him.)* O-y-y-y! Here they are. I must go out and dine in the restaurant. Otherwise if I keep on receiving visitors, I will never find time for eating nor for sleeping nor for rising. *(Departs.)*

CURTAIN

ACT FOUR

Scene represents a high-class restaurant, mirrors on the walls. Absolom seated at the table, takes the bill of fare, holds it upside down and after righting it, looks on back page and then puts it back on the table.

TEACHER. — *(Enters and advances toward Absolom.)* I think Mr. Absolom is Your Excellency, is n't it so?

ABSOLOM. — Yes! It is I.

TEACHER. — I would like to talk with you for a few minutes.

ABSOLOM. — Y-e-s! What is it?

TEACHER. — I have edited and published school books with latest methods, and I would like to give you a hundred of them. Excuse me for taking liberty with you. I can't help it. The nation is to be blamed for this bother I am giving you now, because of not encouraging the teachers, who have really a poor and miserable life. O-h-h-h! If I fail to sell these school books today, the printer will put me in prison, because the printer's and binder's bills are not paid as yet.

ABSOLOM. — What am I going to do with these school books?

TEACHER. — Distribute them among your friends. Please do not refuse my appeal. A hundred

copies, one quarter lira each, makes about twenty-five liras, which is not much for a man of your wealth.

ABSOLOM. — Is this a good restaurant?

TEACHER. — Yes! It 's run under European management. The teachers are the nation's servants, though nobody cares about them. Really they are the pillars of the nation. The teachers are progressives of the nation. What is the use? They are not appreciated for that! A teacher may get a position to-day and may be discharged after two or three months because he had strong will enough to ask for his salary, because of not flattering the school superintendent. And if it happens that a teacher does keep his position, he often hears from everybody words such as this: " A teacher is a gastronomer, living on the fat of the land " or " The teachers are public charges. " Mr. Absolom! The teachers of our metropolis are reduced to the utmost poverty. I am sure you will buy my school books, after hearing my story about the deplorable condition of teachers.

ABSOLOM. — Is the food clean in this restaurant?

TEACHER. — Y-e-s. The teachers are not the only ones that are poor. Editors, authors, printers, booksellers, at least all those who in any way have to do with books, are poor. We claim progress, but we go back. We seek the light, but we go into darkness. We shout for right, but we go to the left. We look for a good future, but we run

into the past. Oh-h-h-h! Words and words! Empty phrases! Now, Mr. Absolom, shall I send these hundred school books to your house, or —

ABSOLOM. — I 'll give you an answer in a few days. *(Looks around and sees many mirrors; to teacher.)* Are we in the right place? I think they sell mirrors in here.

TEACHER. — No! *(Sits at the same table as Absolom.)* What would you like to eat, Mr. Absolom?

ABSOLOM. — I 'll have steak. *(Teacher calls the waiter and orders steak for two.)*

TEACHER. — Just like this, Mr. Absolom. Have you sympathy for the poor condition of teachers?

ABSOLOM. — Sure!

TEACHER. — Don't you think it 's a shame for the nation to allow the teachers to beg?

ABSOLOM. — Yes! It 's a damn shame.

TEACHER. — If you wish, I could leave the books here.

ABSOLOM. — Let it go for the present. We will talk about it some day. *(Waiter brings the food and puts it on the table. Absolom blesses himself and swallows the steak quickly.)* What a small piece of steak that was! Heavens! Tell that waiter to bring a whole lot.

TEACHER. — Waiter!

WAITER. — Yes, sir.

TEACHER. — Give us an order of boiled rice, and an order of artichokes.

AUTHOR. — *(Enters, advances to Absolom's table, a parcel in his hand.)* I think I have the

honor to see Mr. Absolom Esq. *(Absolom pays no attention and keeps on eating, teacher does the same.)* I think I have the luck to stand in front of that famous man, who has arrived in our city to be called the patron of literature. *(Absolom takes the spoon and starts to eat boiled rice as soon as the waiter has served it. Teacher also is eating in silence.)* I think I have the luck to be right by the side of the person whose name I read in the paper a few days ago. *(Absolom and teacher still silent, and always eating.)* I think you are Mr. Absolom! Are you not?

ABSOLOM. — Yes! It is me! *(Author takes a chair at the same table.)*

WAITER. — *(To author.)* What do you wish to eat?

AUTHOR. — Eggs fried in butter. *(Puts the parcel on the chair.)*

ABSOLOM. — *(Eats all of the boiled rice.)* Waiter! Fried mackerel without, please.

AUTHOR. — Mr. Absolom! Really it is a great honor, it is a big fortune for me to be seated at the same table with you. Your servant is an author but at the foot of the ladder. I could say I am partly poet, too. I have written a few tragedies and would like to present to you twenty copies of each. *(Waiter brings fried eggs and mackerel and puts them on the table.)*

LAWYER. — *(Enters, and runs to Absolom.)* O-o-o-o! How do you do! Welcome, Mr. Absolom! My greetings!

ABSOLOM. — Very well, thank you! How do you do?

LAWYER. — I am one of the nation's lawyers, and hearing of your arrival hastened here to offer my greatest respects and at the same time to ask you to give me your cases.

ABSOLOM. — I have no case!

LAWYER. — If you did n't have a case, what is bringing you here then?

ABSOLOM. — I came here for another reason.

LAWYER. — It is impossible that a famous man like you should not have a case. Not only is it impossible, but it is a shame. A man like you ought to have hundreds of cases, and a few of the lawyers ought to make their living by your grace. If you do not have a case, who will have, then? The poor?

ABSOLOM — I have no case with anybody.

LAWYER. — It is astonishing! Why not have intentions of bringing a case against someone?

ABSOLOM. — I have n't the least cause to bring a case against anyone.

LAWYER. — It is not necessary to have a good cause to bring a case against someone. Just open a case with the lawyer, and that's all —

ABSOLOM. — What would be my profit in that?

LAWYER. — You won't see any profit, but your lawyer will, and thank you for it. All rich men do things like this. To give a chance to the lawyer to live, they usually bring a suit against their opponents.

ABSOLOM. — I don't believe in those disgraceful things.

LAWYER. — *(Laughing.)* Ha, ha, ha! I was joking,

Mr. Absolom! No fooling, let us be a little serious. I heard that you had an argument on the boat with somebody, and he had insulted you by using foul language. *(Takes a chair at the same table. Waiter comes and takes his order, while the others continue eating.)*

ABSOLOM. — Absolutely not!

LAWYER. — And that you answered him back, too.

ABSOLOM. — Never.

LAWYER. — That the scuffle was on.

ABSOLOM. — Nothing like it has happened.

LAWYER. — That you hit him over the head.

ABSOLOM. — It 's a lie!

LAWYER. — That he slapped your face, too.

ABSOLOM. — Entirely a lie.

LAWYER. — That a third person entered into the fight, too!

ABSOLOM. — There was no second person. How could there be a third?

LAWYER. — That he pulled your arm.

ABSOLOM. — Wrong!

LAWYER. — That he held the other man's arm, too.

ABSOLOM. — Lie!

LAWYER. — And separated you two.

ABSOLOM. — Never heard of it.

LAWYER. — That you were not satisfied with this separation and wanted to take the case to court.

ABSOLOM. — How many more lies?

LAWYER. — That you have looked for a first-class lawyer.

ABSOLOM. — All of them are lies.

LAWYER. — That you wanted to call me.

ABSOLOM. — Absolutely not.

LAWYER. — So I may defend your case, and that 's why I came here.

ABSOLOM. — *(Two more men with parcels in their hands approached Absolom's table and wanted to talk to him.)* Nothing like that. *(Sees more men coming. To waiter.)* Waiter! How much is my bill, please?

WAITER. — Five liras and eighty-five piasters.

ABSOLOM. — Five liras! What have I eaten?

LAWYER. — Yes! You did n't eat all that, your guests did. I came over here to defend this case as a lawyer.

AUTHOR. — Really it is not gracious to let Mr. Absolom pay for our dinner.

TEACHER. — Yes! I am much ashamed of it, too. It was our duty to treat Mr. Absolom to dinner.

LAWYER. — *(Absolom pays waiter while leaving restaurant.)* Next time we shall treat you to dinner.

CURTAIN

ACT FIVE

Scene represents Manoog's house. Tables, chairs and waste-basket in the room.

ABSOLOM. — *(Enters. Sees about twenty letters on his table, opens them one by one, reads and destroys them, throwing the pieces on the floor. After pacing around the room a few times he exclaims disgustedly.)* Seems to me those people wish to relieve me of my money, leading me by my nose. Since coming to this city I have n't had one minute's rest. Hardly one is gone, when the next one enters and asks for money. Did I come here to distribute my money to everybody? What disgraceful people! I have never seen nor heard the like. I am thinking of throwing them out. They are so numerous I don't know which one to go to or which one to handle. I will have to hire four or five persons to do nothing but throw out the callers. And if I do put them out, the whole city will talk and humiliate me, saying that I am an uncivilized person, and I am poor. At the same time I don't want anybody to talk bad about me. O-o-h Lord! What trouble is this we are in? I wish I had never stepped into this city. It 's going to be hard to finish. I ought to find a girl quickly,

and take the boat and go home. These people will make me bankrupt. It is something unbearable. I shall burst now! Work hard to save a few liras, and come to this city to distribute it to teachers, authors, and how do I know how many more devils! Who ever heard of such a thing?

MANOOG. — *(Opens the door, enters slowly.)* I think you are a little excited to-night.

ABSOLOM. — You said something! Excited? Huh! More than that. If it was somebody else in my place, believe me, he would explode with anger by this time.

MANOOG. — My soul, Mr. Absolom! What has happened?

ABSOLOM. — What do you think it can be? I can't rest for one minute. If I stay home they come in and ask for money. If I go out on the street again I will be surrounded, for money. If I go to the restaurant, they are already there waiting for me. And I am running from street to house, from house to street, just to get rid of them. Please tell me, what hole to go into so I may be relieved from them?

MANOOG. — You are right. I don't understand myself. Look! How many times I have started to speak about my Municipalities and each time I have been interrupted.

ABSOLOM. — I destroyed twenty letters only a while ago.

MANOOG. — What did they say in your letters?

ABSOLOM. — Some of them wanted to come with me as

a teacher in my house. One wants to present me a book, and I 'll have to pay him twenty-five liras for that. Another letter asks me to pay double subscription for a newspaper. What do I know? Lots more letters, and there is no time to count them, so —

MANOOG. — The poor fellows! They need the money and can't help it.

ABSOLOM. — If they want to live they must work. They must learn a trade or do what they like. What have I done that these people should be throwing themselves on my shoulders? Am I supposed to give them everything I have got?

MANOOG. — Why should you?

ABSOLOM. — They ought to have a little shame. Do you think I could go to a person unknown to me and say to him "good morning, how do you do, and give me some money"? Could you do that, Mr. Manoog?

MANOOG. — Never! May God never show me that day!

ACTOR. — *(Enters with trembling steps, approaches Absolom and gives him a letter.)*

ABSOLOM. — *(Without opening the letter.)* What do you want, young man?

ACTOR. — *(Stammering.)* It 's written in it.

ABSOLOM. — *(Angry.)* In it or out of it, keep it for yourself. Tell me what you want!

ACTOR. — I have a show to-morrow night for my benefit, and I brought two box-tickets for you.

ABSOLOM. — *(Throws the letter in the actor's face.)* I don't want it.

MANOOG. — By force is no way to sell tickets.

ACTOR. — I have been walking on theatrical stages for ten years.

ABSOLOM. — *(Exclaiming.)* You could have been seated.

ACTOR. — And I am a servant to the nation.

ABSOLOM. — Why don't you be a master to the nation? I don't care what you are? Those are useless words and phrases.

MANOOG. — *(To actor.)* Mr. Absolom is right. Those are useless words and phrases.

ACTOR. — It 's ten years I have been teaching the nation in a school of morals.

ABSOLOM. — What do I care?

MANOOG. — *(To actor.)* What does he care?

ACTOR. — Just for that I think I have the right to invite a noble person like you to the play which is to be given for my benefit.

ABSOLOM. — I don't want an invitation.

MANOOG. — *(To actor.)* He does n't want an invitation.

ACTOR. — *(To Absolom.)* If you don't wish to buy these box-tickets, can you tell me to whom shall I give them?

ABSOLOM. — You may take them any place you wish. It is not my business.

MANOOG. — *(To actor.)* It is not his business.

ACTOR. — Please don't refuse me. Refusing will cause me public humiliation.

ABSOLOM. — Go on about your business! I am tired of listening to such useless talk.

MANOOG. — *(To actor.)* He is tired of listening to such useless talk.

ACTOR. — O-h-h-h! Going out unsuccessful from here means my death.

ABSOLOM. — I have no time to listen to you.

MANOOG. — *(To actor.)* He has no time to listen to you.

ACTOR. — It is only four liras. Take them please. I had great hopes that you would buy them. I am in need of the money very much.

ABSOLOM. — Go out, for Heaven's sake! Must we listen to you all day?

PRINTER. — *(Enters suddenly and walking to Absolom exclaims rather angrily.)* Are n't you ashamed of yourself?

ABSOLOM. — *(Hesitating.)* What have I got to be ashamed of?

PRINTER. — Why did you keep the poor chap waiting for two hours?

ABSOLOM. — Who kept him waiting? Who asked him to wait? I ordered him out but he would n't go.

PRINTER. — *(Angrily.)* Yes! You were trying to put him out without paying your four lira debt.

ABSOLOM. — I don't owe him anything!

PRINTER. — Yes, you do! I was not going to print tickets and circulars for his plays if he had n't told me that the money collected from you, which you owe him, he would give to me to-night. I have been waiting downstairs two hours so he may come down and pay for the printing, and here you are bawling out the poor chap.

ABSOLOM. — What is this? I? I owe him money? Absolutely not!

MANOOG. — *(To printer.)* Absolutely not!

ACTOR. — *(To printer.)* Mr. Printer, I did n't say for sure that Mr. Absolom owed me the money. I simply said that I thought I could sell him the box-tickets for four liras.

PRINTER. — Why did you lie to me, then? Liar!

ACTOR. — Because I wanted my circular printed on time.

PRINTER. — *(To actor.)* Am I your play doll?

MANOOG. — *(To actor.)* Is he your play doll?

ACTOR. — No! Why should you be my play doll?

PRINTER. — *(To actor.)* You miserable one! You disgraceful thing! You shameless and brazen-faced thing!

ACTOR. — You are all of them yourself.

PRINTER. — You are all of them yourself.

ACTOR. — No! I am not! You are! *(Argument leads to fight between printer and actor. Absolom and Manoog are barely successful in separating them.)*

ABSOLOM. — *(After separating them.)* Get out of here! Go out on the street and fight all you want.

PRINTER. — *(To Absolom.)* What right have you to poke your nose into the fight? You can't throw me out from here. I demand my money and no matter where my debtor be, I could claim admittance and demand my money.

ABSOLOM. — *(To actor.)* You go, then!

ACTOR. — *(Pitifully.)* How can I? You have seen what he did in your presence.

PRINTER. — I won't take one step, unless he goes first.

ACTOR. — I can't go out on the street unless he departs.

ABSOLOM. — *(To Manoog.)* Mr. Manoog. Let us go out then!

ACTOR. — *(Kneels and puts his arms around Absolom's knees.)* Please lend me four liras. *(Absolom refuses but seeing there is no way to get out of it, gnashes his teeth, takes out four liras and gives it to printer.)*

PRINTER. — Thank you, Mr. Absolom. *(Departs.)*

ACTOR. — Thank you, Mr. Absolom, and please excuse me. *(Departs.)*

ABSOLOM. — *(To Manoog.)* What do you know about that, Mr. Manoog?

MANOOG. — I have nothing to say because there is n't anything left to say.

ABSOLOM. — Go down, and if you can, close all the doors tight and order your wife never to open them.

MANOOG. — Very well.

ABSOLOM. — So we may be able to have a little rest and see what we can do about our plans.

MANOOG. — Right you are.

ABSOLOM. — Hurry up! I know they will be here individually.

MANOOG. — I 'll go right now. *(Departs.)*

PHOTOGRAPHER. — *(Enters with his assistant. Absolom seated on chair reading paper.)* Good morning, Mr. Absolom!

ABSOLOM. — *(Folds the paper and puts it on table.)* Good morning! Let us take this picture of ours

as soon as possible. I have to visit a few gentlemen to-day.

PHOTOGRAPHER. — All right.

ABSOLOM. — I want my picture taken in a magnificient way. I would like to be seated in the armchair, having my two men servants and one maid in front of me. Take my picture as if I were on the farm — on one side show plowing, on the other side seeding; on this side harvesting, on the other side mowing; on one side pasturing sheep, on the other side milking cows; on this side warming milk, on the other side making butter; on one side cutting ripened watermelon, on the other side the ducks and geese swimming in the pond; on this side chopping wood in the grove, on the other side transporting wheat by oxen carts. At least, you know, do everything as it is on the farm, so that it may be seen with me in the picture.

PHOTOGRAPHER. — It is impossible to have everything you mentioned in the picture. The only thing I can do is to have a few of your men servants and maids standing beside you.

ABSOLOM. — Why is it impossible?

PHOTOGRAPHER. — Because it is impossible.

ABSOLOM. — How do you take the aristocrat's pictures?

PHOTOGRAPHER. — They usually have their portraits taken standing or seated on a chair.

ABSOLOM. — How can you tell they are famous men?

PHOTOGRAPHER. — When the picture is large and handsomely finished.

ABSOLOM. — My picture, too, has got to be just like that, of course.

PHOTOGRAPHER. — Surely.

ABSOLOM. — Standing or sitting?

PHOTOGRAPHER. — Either way you wish.

ABSOLOM. — How do you suggest? What position do you think would be more artistic?

PHOTOGRAPHER — For you I think standing would be more appropriate.

ABSOLOM. — Very well! The servants should be facing me, is n't that so?

PHOTOGRAPHER. — Yes!

ABSOLOM. — Just as if I was bawling them out and they look humble.

PHOTOGRAPHER. — Admirable.

ABSOLOM. — As if I was beating them and afterwards calming down.

PHOTOGRAPHER. — Great thought!

ABSOLOM. — How is my suit?

PHOTOGRAPHER. — Marvelous.

ABSOLOM. — I have another watch. Can I wear it on the other side?

PHOTOGRAPHER. — One watch and chain is plenty. More is superfluous.

ABSOLOM. — I have paid fifty liras for this suit. How do you suppose it could be known from my picture that the material in my suit is rich and elegant.

PHOTOGRAPHER. — Don't worry, it will be understood by everybody.

ABSOLOM — How are you going to show it?

PHOTOGRAPHER. — Ease your mind.

ABSOLOM. — Don't let people think that it is only a three-lira suit?

PHOTOGRAPHER. — Be sure about that.

ABSOLOM. — All right!

PHOTOGRAPHER. — I am going into the other room to make preliminary preparations, and I will be ready for you after a few minutes.

ABSOLOM. — Very well!

PHOTOGRAPHER. — If you wish, while you wait, I will send for a barber to arrange your hair and mustache a little.

ABSOLOM. — That will be fine. *(The assistant hurries out and returns with barber, bag in hand. Barber bows to Absolom and goes backwards just to show respect. Absolom to barber.)* Come and fix my hair a little.

BARBER. — It 's our duty, sir!

ABSOLOM. — Give me a good hair cut because I am going to have the photographer take my picture when you finish.

BARBER. — With great pleasure, Mr. Ab —

ABSOLOM. — *(Cuts short barber's conversation.)* I pay a great deal of attention to my head.

BARBER. — *(Opens his bag, takes out his shaving set. Absolom sits on a chair and barber throws the apron around him.)* S-u-r-e! *(Sighs.)* A-h-h-h if you did n't who would then? *(Sighs again.)* O-h-h-h. I wish I had no other worries and —

ABSOLOM. — Go ahead, fix it up! Let me see.

BARBER. — I know I am guilty of not coming to welcome

you, but I could n't help it. Circumstances made it impossible for me to perform my duty, otherwise to-day I would have felt more free to apply to Your Excellency for —

ABSOLOM. — We will talk about that later. Go ahead and arrange my hair, the man is waiting for me.

BARBER. — No harm! He can wait. E-r-r-r — To appeal to Your Excellency if it is possible — you know, — e-r-r-r seventy or eighty liras. E-r-r you know! I am a barber belonging to the same country.

ABSOLOM. — *(Angry.)* What do you mean — seventy or eighty liras?

BARBER. — Please don't get nervous. I want to say that if you could loan me seventy or eighty liras to send to my son in Paris, to help him pay his debts, get his medical diploma, return to his native home town, open his office, make money, and pay you back in a year or two, the principal with interest — What is the use? I don't dare to make such a request because I failed to "welcome you" on your arrival. If I had come to welcome you, I could ask the favor more freely now. *(During conversation barber is slowly combing Absolom's hair, and scissors in his hand is coaxing him.)* As long as I did n't come to welcome you, of course, you have the right to refuse my plea, although I am one of the country's artisans.

ABSOLOM. — I have no time to listen to such a cock

and bull story. If you are going to fix my hair, go ahead and do it! *(Disgustedly to himself.)* What an unlawful city! Good morning! How do you do! Give me some money! Money and money! Am I supposed to greet people or not? God bless me! And God forgive me! There is a limit to anything, sir! I understand now. I have got to flee and get away from this city, and the sooner the better.

CLERGYMAN. — *(Enters, talking to himself.)* It seems to me that somebody has made Sir Absolom angry.

ABSOLOM. — This is something unbearable, Father!

CLERGYMAN. — Hail! Blessing Lord, Mr. Absolom! You may not know me, but I know you very well. How are you?

ABSOLOM. — To tell the truth, Father, I don't feel good!

CLERGYMAN. — Trusting God it is n't so. I would like to be alone with you. *(To barber.)* Would you mind stepping outside for a minute? I will intercede for you, too. I will get an idea of your plea from Mr. Absolom and will put in a good word so he will do a little favor for you, too. *(To Absolom.)* Mr. Absolom! This is our barber, I hope you know him! E-r-r-r he, too, is a citizen of our country! The real Armenian blood is flowing in his veins, too. He has got to be looked out for, too. *(Barber departs.)* I asked for a special and private interview with you for this reason. You want to get married!

Why should n't you get married? Hearing it, I was glad! Why should n't I be glad? Men of your kind ought to get married, so rich children may become numerous in the country. You are looking for a good-looking girl, I hear. Why should n't you? If I were in your shoes I would look for one, too. You want the girl to have money. Why should n't you? Really, marrying a girl without money nowadays is not in style. Now I have under my control girls who are rich and beautiful.

ABSOLOM. — Thanks! We will interview them some day. If you want to wait a little while, after my picture is taken we shall go. To tell you the truth, I have nothing in mind, but to look for a good girl. I will stay in this city a few days more and if I find one, I will marry her and take her with me. If I fail to find one, I am going back home, just the same, because the callers won't leave me alone one minute. I am tired and disgusted with them.

CLERGYMAN. — Right you are! And this is a bad year, too, sir. The poor in the country are numerous. Anyway, I will wait for you, and we will go together.

ABSOLOM. — This nasty thing, too, came to arrange my hair, and —

PHOTOGRAPHER. — *(Enters, wearing artist's frock.)* All right, Mr. Absolom! Come in!

ABSOLOM. — How about my hair?

PHOTOGRAPHER — Never mind! I will comb it.

ABSOLOM. — How about my mustache?

PHOTOGRAPHER. — All right. I will arrange it. *(They depart.)*

CLERGYMAN. — *(Alone, to himself.)* I don't know how to find a way to get money from him for my winter wood and coal.

BARBER. — *(Enters. To clergyman.)* Father! You have spoiled all my plans. If you had n't come in, I could have pulled a few liras out of that man. M-y-y-y-y goodness but he is generous! Generous at heart! He has given money to all the editors and teachers! We are too late!

CLERGYMAN. — H'm-m! Those fellows are the cause of us poor people being unable to get money from strangers in this city. As soon as a new guest lands in the city, all the editors and teachers swarm on him! Damned nuisances! That 's what they are.

BARBER. — What are we going to do now?

CLERGYMAN. — I 'll intercede for you. You mediate for me, so each of us will be able to get from him at least a few liras.

BARBER. — That 's fine!

CLERGYMAN. — He will be in soon. I am going to whisper in his ear and say " be generous to the barber because he is well known by all aristocratic people, and he may interfere with your plans if you don't. "

BARBER. — What is his intention?

CLERGYMAN. — He is looking for a rich girl to marry.

BARBER. — Wonderful! I also will tell him not to trust anyone but the Reverend Father.

CLERGYMAN. — That 's fine!

BARBER. — That 's a good way! Don't you think so?

CLERGYMAN. — He is one of those innocent fools, you know.

BARBER. — Yes! He is a facile man, but they have already robbed him, Father! They have robbed him. We arrived here too late. *(Absolom enters with a smile on his face. To Absolom.)* Excuse me Mr. Absolom, for making that plea to you. I thought I could be of some service to you.

CLERGYMAN. — Mr. Absolom! You should know that our master barber has been invited privately to almost every house in our metropolis and knows all the girls.

ABSOLOM. — Is that so?

CLERGYMAN. — Yes! Furthermore, he is a good man, be generous to his plea.

BARBER. — Don't get separated from His Eminence, *(Pointing to clergyman.)* if you really have matrimonial intentions. The young fellows married through the Father are very happy. I am glad to see that your quest is in the hands of an active and intelligent clergyman like him. I am sure you will be happy in your marriage.

CLERGYMAN. — *(To barber.)* You have got to help me, too, Mr. barber.

BARBER. — Anything I am able to —

CLERGYMAN. — I need your help.

BARBER. — I am there.

CLERGYMAN. — Thank you! Mr. Absolom is not a stranger. He, too, is a citizen of our country. He has come to this city to marry. It 's our duty to help him.

BARBER. — Necessarily! I have nothing against him. Moreover, he is a good and virtuous man.

CLERGYMAN. — It is not right to tell him to his face, but he is a splendid man.

BARBER. — He is a very fine man.

CLERGYMAN. — When you look at him, you can see he is a serious man.

BARBER. — Who would see any different? I like him.

CLERGYMAN. — I mean to say, if anybody asks you, say a good word for Honorable Absolom.

BARBER. — Certainly!

CLERGYMAN. — Mr. Absolom is an experienced man, he will reward you later.

BARBER. — With great pleasure, and with all my heart. *(Aside sighing.)* A-h-h-h! If only my son has taken that diploma of his!

PHOTOGRAPHER. — *(Enters.)* After five days, Mr. Absolom! After five days the pictures will be ready. *(Departs.)*

ABSOLOM. — Very well! *(Clergyman calls barber to one side of room, whispers and persuades him to go out. Barber departs.)*

CLERGYMAN. — *(Turns to Absolom.)* — Excuse me that I am a little late in making my revelations about this barber. This fellow has such

an effrontery, he follows all the newcomers to Constantinople, and tries to extract money from them. He is a worthless man. As your confessor, it is my duty to warn you to beware of people of this class, who approach the rich for the sake of getting a few liras. Oh-h-h! How I hate that kind of people!

ABSOLOM. — I am thankful to you for your affability and goodness of heart.

CLERGYMAN. — Don't pay any attention to such people.

ABSOLOM. — No!

SHOOSHAN. — *(Enters and talks gaspingly.)* Father! I know what you are after. I heard all about it while I was downstairs talking to Madam Manoog and that 's why I ran up! Now, tell me! What business have you with Mr. Absolom?

CLERGYMAN. — A small business.

SHOOSHAN. — No! You have nothing to do with him at all! You do your duty, and let us do ours. You ought to be ashamed of yourself! *(Pulls Absolom's right arm.)* Let us go, Mr. Absolom!

CLERGYMAN. — No! You ought to be ashamed of yourself! *(Pulls Absolom's left arm.)* Let us go, Mr. Absolom!

SHOOSHAN. — Clergymen don't do the things you do.

CLERGYMAN. — Don't talk!

SHOOSHAN. — I will talk!

ABSOLOM. — Let my arms go!

SHOOSHAN. — I won't let your arms go. I have the right.

CLERGYMAN. — No madam! I have the right.

SHOOSHAN. — *(Exclaims.)* For the sake of getting a few liras you want to make the poor man miserable. What do you know about girls?

CLERGYMAN. — Don't exclaim! Do you think that I am going to let you rob this noble man? Nothing doing!

ABSOLOM. — What are you arguing for? It 's a shame. I won't marry!

SHOOSHAN. — *(To Absolom.)* That cannot be so. I am going to choose a girl for you. If you are going to find her through the Father, believe me, your honor won't be worth anything.

CLERGYMAN. — On the contrary, whoever chooses his girl through the Father is respectable. *(Takes Absolom's left arm.)* Let us go, Mr. Absolom!

SHOOSHAN. — I won't let him go! I have made the girls ready and we are going to interview them, and negotiate for an engagement.

MANOOG. — *(Enters, sees Mr. Absolom with one pulling at one arm and one at the other.)* Are n't you ashamed of yourselves? Leave this man go! *(Pulls Mr. Absolom to one side.)*

CLERGYMAN. — I 'll wait for you outside, Mr. Absolom! *(Letting go of Absolom's arm, departs.)*

SHOOSHAN. — I 'll meet you on the corner Mr. Absolom! *(Letting go of Absolom's arm, departs.)*

MANOOG. — *(To Absolom, sighing.)* A-h-h-h! Why on earth do you give them so much liberty? It 's

you I blame! You are easy with everybody. Don't you know that all of them approach you just for what they can get?

ABSOLOM. — Is that right?

MANOOG. — Why should I lie? You wish to get married; very well. I will find good girls for you. Choose and marry the one you like.

ABSOLOM. — A good suggestion!

MANOOG. — I 'll make it so I can show you girls from good families.

ABSOLOM. — All right! Show them to me.

MANOOG. — To become engaged to a girl through a matchmaker is out of style now.

ABSOLOM. — Is that so?

MANOOG. — Moreover, it 's a disgrace.

ABSOLOM. — If it 's a disgrace I don't want her.

MANOOG. — I am sure I could make you accept the girl I choose for you.

ABSOLOM. — Thank you, Mr. Manoog.

MANOOG. — Let me have fifty liras.

ABSOLOM. — What is the meaning of that?

MANOOG. — I said give me that fifty liras!

ABSOLOM. — Why should I?

MANOOG. — By golly! Just give it to me I said, that 's all! Of course, I know something when I am asking you for it. God bless me! Don't worry! I am not going to run away with it!

ABSOLOM. — I know you won't run away, but —

MANOOG. — Are you afraid to give me fifty liras? That much is coming to me anyway! Look at all the expenses I went to for you.

ABSOLOM. — Huh! All the expenses! What expenses are there?

MANOOG. — Did you suppose I was going to note them down one by one? My wife knows all about them. Let that case go for now.

ABSOLOM. — No! Let us talk about it now. Fifty liras! How many days am I in your house?

MANOOG. — I have a mortgage to pay off. The man came and urged me to pay that sum. If I fail to pay, we shall be put out of the house. This would be a disgrace for me, and also would not look so good for a man like you. Let me have that fifty liras now, and later we will arrange our accounts.

ABSOLOM. — What a disgraceful thing is this, anyway?

MANOOG. — I make a promise not to charge commission if I find a girl for you. Let us have this money! Come on! Be a good sport!

ABSOLOM. — Why should I? What have I done to you?

MANOOG. — I am sorry I cannot make you understand. Do as I told you! Why don't you let me have that money?

ABSOLOM. — I won't give it to you, and furthermore I am going to leave your household, too.

MANOOG. — Fifty liras is not a big sum to give me. Really, I did n't expect you would refuse my request.

ABSOLOM. — You may expect it.

MANOOG. — A grave and aristocratic man like you should n't say a word about fifty liras.

ABSOLOM. — I will take my trunks and go.

MANOOG. —You may go after you pay me fifty liras.

ABSOLOM. — No, I won't give it to you.

MANOOG. — Yes, you will. The law will take care of you. *(Departs threatening. Absolom starts to pack his things in haste.)*

MADAM MANOOG. — *(Enters and is astonished to see Absolom packing.)* Why are you packing, Mr. Absolom?

ABSOLOM. — *(Gaspingly.)* I will go! I must go. I have changed my mind on the whole subject. I won't get married.

MADAM MANOOG. — Why? Did anybody make you angry?

ABSOLOM. — No!

MADAM MANOOG. — Why are you angry, then?

ABSOLOM. — I am not angry.

MADAM MANOOG. — Mr. Absolom, my son. Mr. Manoog was going to ask fifty liras of you. Did he?

ABSOLOM. — Yes, he did.

MADAM MANOOG. — There is a mistake.

ABSOLOM. — *(Amazed.)* A mistake?

MADAM MANOOG. — Yes! It is not fifty liras. It should be three hundred and fifty-five liras. Please do this favor for us. You are a grave man. Let us get through this mortgage by your generosity.

ABSOLOM. — *(Opens the window and exclaims at the top of his voice.)* Porte-e-r-r! *(Keeps on packing, every once in a while exclaiming.)* Porter! Porte-e-e-r-r!

PORTER. — Yes, your honor!

ABSOLOM. — Call two more porters, right off, quick!

(Porter goes out and returns with two other porters. Three porters and Absolom hastily and in any old way carry trunks and kits out of room. Absolom with arms full is still trying to assist porters and picking up what has been dropped on the way. They depart.)

CURTAIN